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# Backwoods Home magazine

*practical ideas for self reliant living*

## **What's liberal — What's conservative?**

**Kerosene lamps revisited**

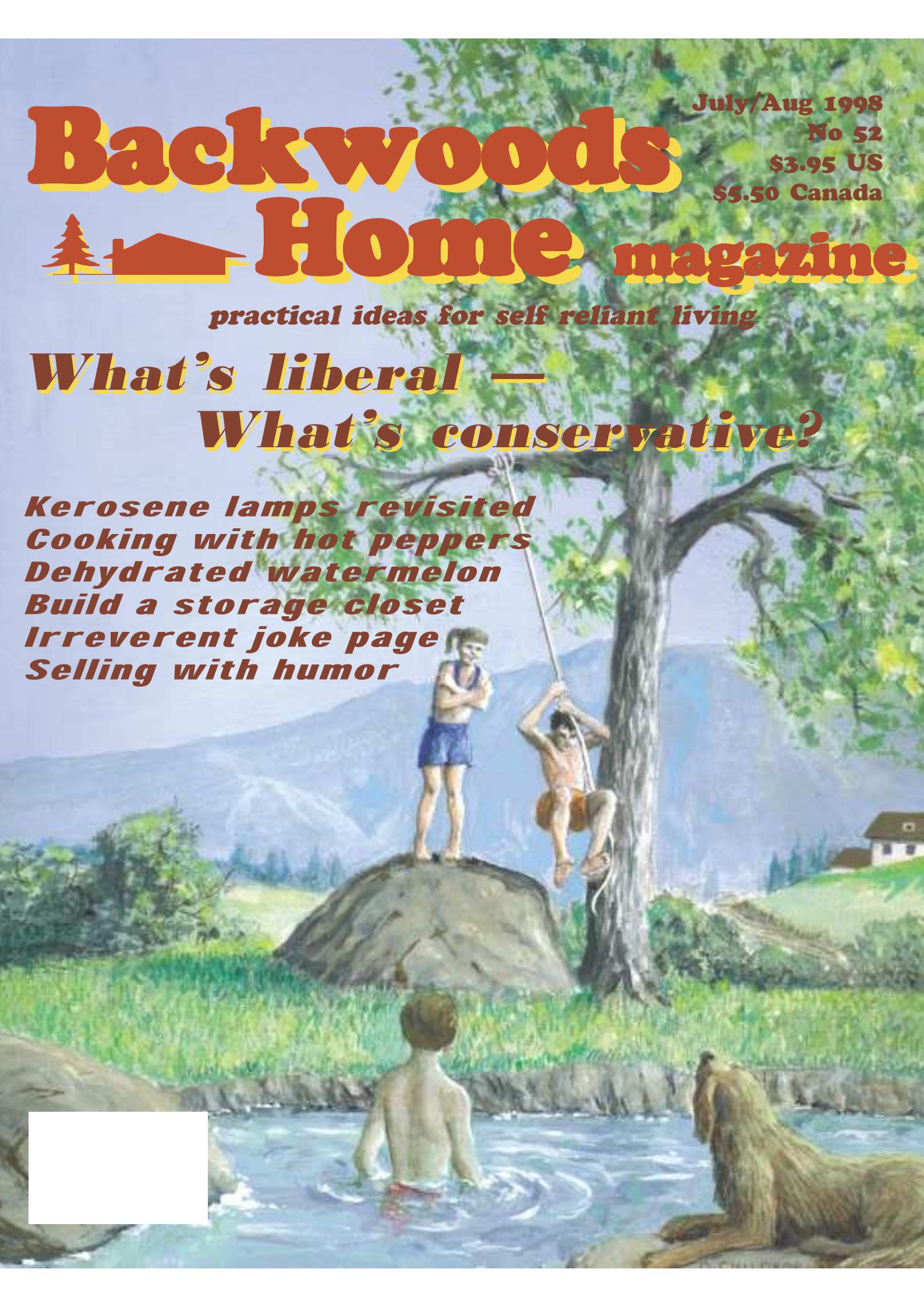
**Cooking with hot peppers**

**Dehydrated watermelon**

**Build a storage closet**

**Irreverent joke page**

**Selling with humor**



## My view

### Happy birthday Communist Manifesto

The other day I was reminded that this year is the 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto. It would have eluded me but on May 1st National Public Radio did a paean to the book that expounded the “philosophy of the working man.” The book, of course, was written by Karl Marx, a man who couldn’t hold a job.

Caller after caller phoned in to praise the book’s ideals and bemoan communism’s passing. Communism, we all know, has fallen on bad times. But some of the callers explained that it was actually relevant in 1848 when it was formulated, though perhaps not so relevant during most of the 20th century, but they swore it has become relevant again today.

Let’s see what they were really saying: Communism was relevant before anyone adopted it, wasn’t relevant when it was put to the test and proved to be a disaster, but now it is relevant again today even though most of the world has abandoned it as unworkable. I’m not going to bother to point out the absurdities in this line of reasoning.

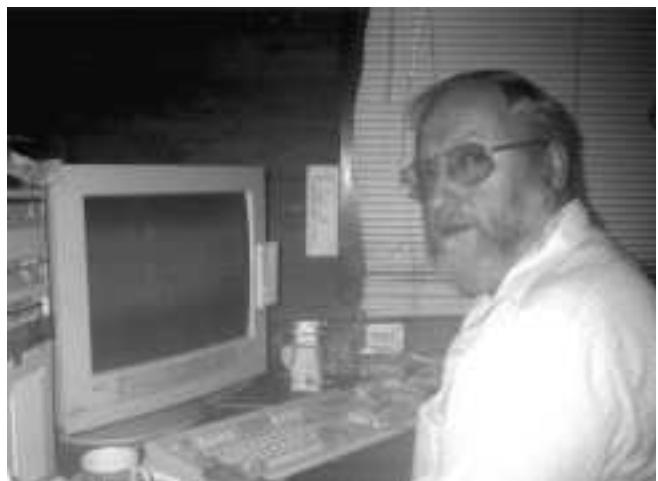
It is also interesting that none of the callers mentioned that communism still exists among a quarter of the world’s population: in China, where the Chinese are trying to get away from it because it has crippled their economy, and in North Korea, one of the most oppressive dictatorships remaining in the world. Nor did anyone point out that, to save themselves, the Chinese are experimenting with Marx’s bogey-man—capitalism.

### Your tax dollars at work

But what bothered me most was that this program was being supported by my tax dollars. The same way Marx couldn’t hold a job, National Public Radio can’t get anyone to finance their programming the way even a rock & roll station can, so they have the IRS wrench it from those of us who can hold jobs. If that’s the way you want your tax dollars spent, fine. But I’d like mine spent on something productive—or at least not wasted on glorifying murder.

Communism, which professed to be the philosophy of the working man, was in reality the most effective machine of death ever contrived by man. At least 20 million, and some say upwards of 80 million, died at the hands of communism in the Soviet Union. Another 60 million died in China. And in the “Killing Fields” of Cambodia, 2 to 3 million were murdered in recent memory.

Hitler and fascism killed 12 million, including 6 million Jews, in his concentration camps, and since I was a schoolboy I have been told fascism is evil. 12 million? That’s just a drop in the bucket compared to communism.



*John Silveira*

Still, the moderator and the esteemed guest—a professor of history and labor—and most of the callers drooled over the prospects of reviving it and mused about it as if it were the panacea for all that ills mankind. And this, folks, was funded in part by your tax dollars. Had this money been spent to praise fascism, I’ll bet you whatever the IRS leaves me of my next paycheck that these same people would be rioting in the streets. It leaves my head spinning.

### Nationalizing Microsoft

And, while they were pining for the return of communism, what else did they want? Well, one caller suggested they nationalize Microsoft.

And why not? What does Bill Gates do with all of his wealth—\$40 billion at last estimate. How does he spend it? I know he can’t eat more than I. He can only wear one suit of clothes at a time, and only drive one car. Granted, he can eat three times a day in restaurants if he wants, wear designer clothes, and drive a better car. But there are people doing that already who make hardly more than me and that would hardly make a dent in his \$40 billion, anyway. So, what’s he do with it all? I’ll tell you what he does with it. Gates, and others like him, provide thousands with employment—both directly and indirectly—and he creates new products that make our lives easier. Even the \$30 million he recently spent on a Winslow Homer painting was not “consumed.” It went to someone else who will ultimately invest it to create even more jobs.

On the other hand, what do the NPR whiners propose to do with Microsoft? They said they would turn the whole enterprise over to the control of the government, the people who have given us the Postal Service, Social Security, and Defense Department contracting with its \$700 toilets and coffee pots. But, come to think of it, I’d be willing to pay \$700 for a toilet if I could flush NPR along with its disproven Marxist ideas down the tubes. — **John Silveira**

# Dehydrated watermelon—for flavor explosions all year round

By Robert L. Williams

**N**ow that it's the peak of the summer growing season and you can find watermelons, cantaloupes, and honeydew melons at nearly all supermarkets, curb markets, and roadside stands, you can pig out on the juicy delights. And each taste is made a little sweeter by the realization that within a few weeks there will be no more melons for months and months.

At least, it is that way for some people. But, starting now, you can provide yourself a full winter's supply of melons of all sorts by simply dehydrating your favorites and then storing them in a suitable place until your appetite tells you to pull them out and eat them.

Dehydrated watermelon? From all corners of the nation come the questions: doesn't dehydrating take all the flavor out of melons? Isn't it a messy job? Doesn't it require a lot of special equipment and other supplies? And what does it taste like when all the water and flavors are removed from the meat of the melon—leather?

## Here are the answers

First, dehydrating watermelon or cantaloupe or any other kind of melon in no way diminishes the flavor of the melon. In fact, it actually increases the

flavor so that you get a rich taste you never before found in a watermelon or honeydew.

Is it a messy job? Not nearly as messy as it is to eat the fresh-cut melon right from the patch or market. All you need to do is butcher the melon, slice it according to instructions given below, and dehydrate it.

As far as equipment is concerned, you can buy an inexpensive dehydrator, or you can make one for nearly nothing. You can even spread the



*Begin the drying process by slicing the watermelon in half, across the middle.*

melon meats in the sun and let nature take its course.

What does dehydrated watermelon or cantaloupe taste like?

Let me assure you that the taste is unlike anything you have ever tried before. First, think of how a fresh melon tastes, and then keep in mind that the melon is largely water, and the water dilutes the sweetness and flavor of the melon greatly. When you take out the water, all that is left is flavor.

Think of it this way. Imagine a glass half-full of terrific grape juice. Take a sip and revel in the great taste. Now fill the glass to the top with tap water and taste the mixture again. Much of the flavor has disappeared. Imagine how flat the taste would be if the mixture were 80 per cent water.

That's about the taste approximation of a good watermelon. Even with the water, it's terrific. Take out the water and you have a flavor explosion beyond comparison.

What you are going to learn in the next few paragraphs is how to prepare the melon, how to dehydrate it, and how to store it.

Start, if you need reassuring, by remembering how great dried fruit in general is. You have doubtless eaten dried apples, plums, peaches, apricots, and grapes. Ever notice how sweet a raisin is?

Ready to work? Start with a good-sized melon. Lay the melon in front of you lengthwise and cut it into halves. Then cut off round slices about an inch and one-half thick. Then cut the melon meat out of the rind. Cut the slices down until each section is about the size of your palm.

This is a good time to remove the seeds, if you wish. If you don't wish, leave them in.

Now you are ready to dehydrate. If you own a dehydrator, pull it out and set it up. Clean the trays thoroughly to avoid any kind of contamination. Some trays come with very thin mesh liners, like incredibly thin screen wire.

You can spread the slices of watermelon onto the mesh sections so that the pieces barely touch each other. It



*Slice five-inch sections of melon and then cut the meat from the slice. De-seed if you wish, at this point. Note the size of the section of watermelon meat.*

is easy to place half a dozen or more chunks of melon in one tray.

I have found that if I add a section of waxed paper or one of the food wrapping products, I can keep the dehydrator from getting so messy. The juice will seep out of the melon and then as it accumulates it will run to the lowest edge of the tray.

For this reason I place a thin strip of wood under the back and one side of the dehydrator so that the juice runs to the front of the tray and then to the low corner. You can set a wide pan of some sort under the corner so that you catch nearly all of the juice.

Don't discard the juice. You can either drink it or use it in beverages as a flavor-adder.

As the melon slices begin to dry, you can, after four or five hours, rotate the trays so that the one that started on the bottom will move to the top, and the one at the top will move to the bottom. Reverse the two middle trays, too.

The reason for doing this is that in nearly all dehydrators the heating element is at the bottom so that heat can rise through the trays. The tray nearest the heating element will dry faster than the others, with the top tray drying last. So if you rotate the trays, you will have fairly uniform drying.

A good plan for tray rotation is to start the dehydrating process early in

the morning, and then in mid-afternoon rotate the trays. Then, before going to bed, rotate them again.

It will take about two days for the melon to dehydrate totally. Give it all the time it needs: you do not want to try to store still-moist melon. If you do, you'll wind

up with spoilage and nothing fit to eat.

The second way to dehydrate is to build your own box. This can consist of a simple rectangular box equipped with a light socket and bulb and with ledges from which to hang shelves. The shelves can be made of a wood-strip border with mesh wire (not metal kinds) stapled across them and covered with Saran wrap or equivalent. Rig it up so that juices do not drip on the bulb.

The third way to dehydrate melons (or anything else) is to use the sun and

some screen mesh. Construct a border of wood strips and then attach the mesh to cover the space in-between. Make another section the same way. A good measurement is three feet square.

Use wood strips thick enough that when the screen mesh is loaded, the mesh will not be resting on top of the melon. In other words, if the melon slices are 1.5 inches thick, the space between the mesh layers should be at least two inches.

When both sections are completed, cover the first section with Saran wrap and then lay your melon sections on the wrap. Fill the section from border to border. Then lay the section in the sun, with the melon side facing up. Position the other section so that the wood-strip borders rest together.

It is a good idea to rest the entire assembly atop a couple of bricks or other devices to keep the melons away from the floor or dirt. The mesh will keep insects from bothering the melons, and the sun may dehydrate the slices in a short time. You can turn the whole assembly simply by lifting and flipping the two sections. Do this so that both sides of the melon are exposed to the sun.



*Arrange the 3/4-inch thick melon slices on the dehydrator trays as shown.*



*When the slices are dried, remove them from the dehydrator.*

Obviously you need a bright sunny day. If it rains, bring the melons into the house.

You will find that you are far better off by using a real dehydrator rather than a home-made rig, at least in most cases.

Now, how do you store the dehydrated melon? Or, a better question is how to know when the melon is ready.

It is ready when it is very tacky or sticky. When you lift it, if it will stick to your fingers without your grasping it, you are ready to store it.

I store my dehydrated melon in a commercial bag of some sort, like a sandwich bag or freezer bag. First, I wrap it in a clear type of wrap, one slide at a time, and then I slip all the slices into the freezer bag.

Then, just for safety's sake, I keep the bag in the freezer. If you leave it out, there is a chance that someone or something may punch a hole in the bag and let air into it. Room-temperature air is humid, and the result is a rehydration. Soon after that the spoiling starts.

When you are ready to eat the melon, take it out of the freezer and let it come to room temperature. Then chow down.

Do not expect the melon to taste the way it did before you dehydrated it. Appreciate it for its own taste.

Remember, you can use your dehydrator not just for melons but for nearly everything that can be eaten, as long as it has some moisture in it.

So you have used everything but the rind and the seeds. But don't stop now. Use these items, too.

You can make delightful watermelon rind pickles by trimming off all the thick

green and tender pink parts of the rind (in other words, peel the skin off and cut the edible portion away) and cut these into one-inch cubes. Soak the cubes ten hours in a solution of eight tablespoons of salt to one gallon of water.

After the soaking, drain the rind and cook it until not quite tender. Drain, and then make a syrup of four cups of sugar, two cups of vinegar, four teaspoons of whole cloves, eight cinnamon sticks, and a sprinkle of mustard seeds. You can tie all of the spices into a cloth so that they don't stay in the container and darken the pickles.

Heat the syrup to boiling, then let it cool for 15 minutes before you add the watermelon rind and cook until the rind becomes almost transparent. Pack into hot sterilized jars and seal. Add one slice of lemon, if you like, or you can add other spices.

If you want to make watermelon rind preserves, trim the rind as before and cut into thin strips an inch long and half an inch wide and thick. Mix one-half cup of salt to one gallon of

cool water and soak the rinds for 8 to 10 hours. Then drain, rinse, and cook the rinds in water until they are transparent.

Drain again, then make a syrup of 8 cups sugar and 8 cups of water, the juice of four lemons, and any spices like cinnamon or cloves that you prefer (again, in a spice bag). Boil the syrup five to seven minutes and add the rinds. Cook until they are transparent and tender.

When the mixture has thickened to the desirable point, remove from heat and remove the spice bag. Pour the preserves into hot, sterilized jars and seal in a canner or in hot-water bath for 10 minutes.

That takes care of everything but the outer rind and the seeds. Dry the seeds and save them to plant next year, and use the outer rinds for compost.



*The finished product looks like this.*

Then, when winter winds blow and the searing heat of summer is only a memory, you can recapture a taste of summer by pulling out a handful of dehydrated watermelon.

And then your pleasure was well worth the work. Δ

## The Cochran's boost their sales with humor

By Vern Modeland

**F**irst you have to have a source of income before you can successfully make a sustainable home in the backwoods. Michael Cochran thinks that has priority over anything else when it comes to planning your escape to self-reliance.

Maybe your dream is of raising goats and having a garden once you have your shelter hammered into livable shape, but short of poverty or assistance, there has to be income to meet all the outgo. That just never goes away.

Michael Cochran and his wife, Penny, after more than 12 years as a team, are still working on many of the details of getting their own dream homestead established on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. But they're not in a hurry, they say. They've found a fun way of making money. In fact, humor is a tool they say you too can use to make a better living.

Michael and Penny own *Olive Drab Enterprises*. Their business is buying



*The Cochran's are often irreverent with sense of humor.*



*Mike and Penny Cochran stand by their booth at the Preparedness Exposition in Denver, Colorado. They use humor on signs to increase sales.*

and re-selling government surplus property. Some of it they sell at the preparedness expositions and knife and gun shows that are held within 1,000 miles or so of where they live just outside of Grass Valley, California. They're usually easy to locate at these shows and expos. Theirs will be the booth that about anyone can tell you how to find. It'll be one with a large crowd around it, the one where people are walking away with smiles on their faces. And often they're also carrying something they just bought that they never dreamed of buying.

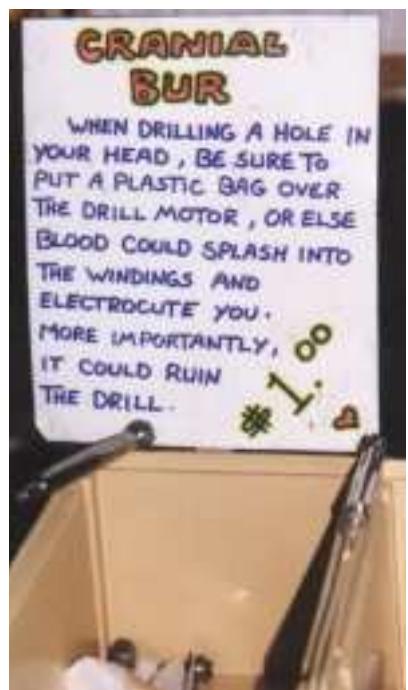
### Humor that sells

Could you resist "Equality Pants" for just \$2, or 3 pair for \$5? "Fit men or women equally. Protect them equally also," explains a sign. Equality Pants in reality are government surplus hospital scrubs.

And who wouldn't want an "Original Coors Crucible?" These are white bone china bowls. "They're

cheap! Trust me on this one," promises another colorful hand-lettered sign.

Or a "Secret 33rd Degree Masonic Illuminati New World Order Glass



*No holds barred with the Cochran signs. Their prices are cheap too.*



Some signs are not for the squeamish. Eye Dropper." Those sell for only 50-cents each.

And there's the Cochran's current sales leader, magnesium with a flint as a fire-starting kit. Not the one-ounce Blue Light special from K-mart at \$7.95, this is pure magnesium—one full pound of it with three inches of genuine flint epoxied on it, to start hundreds of cooking or warming fires in the wilderness. All for just \$10.

"Can save your life," says the sign above a table where Mike regularly demonstrates just how you use it.

The sign goes on to describe a vividly embarrassing imaginary incident where a small flame easily generated from the handy magnesium fire kit might save the hour.

You get the idea. The Cochran's sell more, they say, because they sell with a sense of humor. And for them, it's a well-tuned sense of humor. They've been tweaking it for years since their marriage, expanding on a money-maker Mike had been doing as a sideline for more like 25 years.

Mike and Penny Cochran admittedly both were already experienced in direct sales when they met. He sold automotive batteries and Penny sold auto parts out of trucks, going from business to business. One customer in Auburn, California, was so impressed by their personalities and senses of humor that he finally asked Mike, "Do you know Penny?"

"I said no and he said, 'You two are just alike. You ought to get together.' And he made us a blind date," Mike remembers.

They've been together ever since.

### Utilizing our talent

"Neither of us had any outstanding skill or professional talent," Mike says.



*It can take half an hour to read all the signs at the Cochran's show booths.*

"We didn't have the ability to further ourselves in that way. Neither of us knew how to turn on a computer. It seemed that our one talent was a gift of gab, being able to talk to people, and we enjoyed that. And even though we might not be gifted or highly educated, we were not stupid. We realized that if this was how we could make a living, we ought to invest time and energy and do it correctly."



*No one steals from the Cochran's, nor anyone else for that matter.*

Mike then backs away to explain how what they do today got its real start. He knew a man who had been buying and reselling government surplus goods but thought he wanted a change.

"He asked me to clean out his garage so he could put in a vacuum and floor-buffering machine store. He told me to throw everything away except the floor buffers and vacuum machines. When I opened the garage door, it was full of surplus stuff clear to the ceiling. I told him the stored stuff had value but he kept insisting it wasn't worth anything.

"I kept insisting he could take it to a flea market and sell it. Finally he told me 'take anything you want and go sell it and I'll split with you 50-50.'

"The first day I took a station wagon full. I made \$200. Twenty-five years ago, that was close to a month's pay. I gave him \$100. He couldn't believe it. The following day, I went back and did \$200 again. So we both had \$200. The next weekend I did the same thing again, and he says, 'well, you're mak-

ing more money at the flea market than I could at a vacuum cleaner shop. Let me take you to the [military] base so you can start buying stuff that would really be good for the flea market instead of just emptying out my garage.”

They went into business together buying surplus and reselling it at flea markets. And that’s just what Mike and Penny continued to do early in their marriage. Then another friend suggested they take a look at a gun show. Neither of them had been to one before, Mike recalls.

## Gun shows

Where flea markets charged \$12 to rent a table, a gun show sales space cost more like \$45, they found out. But the potential for income looked better than flea markets.



*Michael Cochran demonstrates a sales leader—magnesium fire-starting kits.*

“And we had enough stuff to rent 20 tables.”

So they sorted through their surplus goodies, selecting what they thought might get the attention of folks who

go to gun shows. They then rented three tables at one of the shows.

“We did so good we were in shock,” says Mike.

“Every time our competition sold \$1 worth of stuff, we sold \$20.”

The Cochrans sold as much the first day of the gun show as they could in a month at flea markets.

And in their free minutes, they walked and talked, looking at what was going on around them. Fewer than half of the exhibitors were selling guns, the Cochrans learned. They also saw there was plenty of competition for selling holsters, ammunition, relocation information, and the like.

“So we shifted to buying more surplus that we thought would fit gun shows.”

Government surplus stocks often included a lot of medical items that they could buy cheaply in quantities.

“Things people could never get at a drug store because they just aren’t available there, things of interest to survivalists or field gun users, so they can prepare a complete First Aid kit and even do dental work.”

There were suture kits, scalpels, burn dressings, disposable thermometers, and rolls of stretch gauze.

Dental tools that the Cochrans bought as surplus included small drill bits, grinding attachments and other tools useful in engraving guns. And, with a little persuasive suggestion, other hobbyists could find a need for surplus dental tools too, Mike adds, sounding much like a salesman.

Some other exhibitors displayed similar things, Mike admits, and their prices sometimes were not all that far apart. But, as true salespeople, he and Penny aren’t easily discouraged. They didn’t do as they saw others doing—



*Some of the signs are political, with a decided anti-government and anti-UN slant.*

“throwing stuff on a table and when people ask how much, make up a price as you go.”

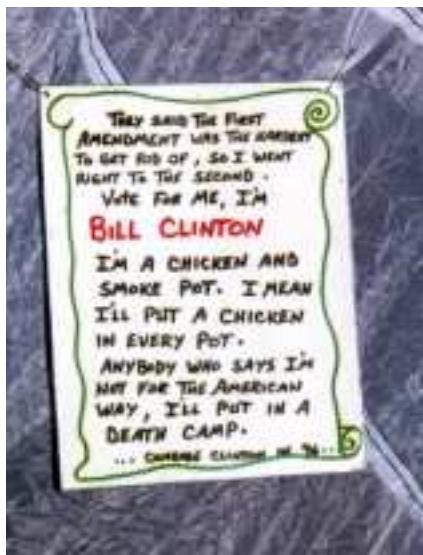
## Jokes as a marketing tool

“We made some signs that had a lot of humor. People liked that and that egged us on to make more.

Soon, we had a sign with a funny



*A close-up of the magnesium fire starter kit sign*



*Every item displayed for sale has its own story to tell.*

saying for about 90 percent of our display products. We found people coming by just to read the signs. It would take them sometimes half an hour to walk around our table to read all of our signs. We became, like, the entertainment section."

"A lot of people would say, 'you ought to charge admission just to read the signs and not sell anything,'" Mike recalls.



*Many of the items they sell are very inexpensive. But can you use them?*

"We started making a profit on 25- and 50-cent and dollar items. Now, guns sell for \$300 and \$500 and more. And not everybody is that rich every day, but most have a couple of bucks to spend. So they come to our tables and read the funny signs and that makes them look at the merchandise and finally they will find something they actually might use."

And a profitable business was born, one that Mike and Penny Cochran think is suitable for a lot of folks who want to live in rural areas.

It takes a lot of time and energy, but the Cochran's think it makes more sense than trying to make meaningful money by selling produce or poultry or hand-crafted items to neighbors or anyone who might happen by the homestead or stop at a roadside stand.

Anybody can do what they do and do it well, Mike is convinced.

"There are now trade shows in every interest you can imagine. Doll shows, auto shows, ham radio, computers. The preparedness shows are endless."

Whatever you get interested in, Mike suggests, ask the people at the shows who look like they do it for a living where they will be going next.

"They'll likely tell you the location, then add where they will be going from there and you can learn the show sponsor or promoters name. "It doesn't take you but an hour at any of these shows and you'll have their schedule for a year. And once you get on the list you'll be getting mail coming out of your ears with offers from all over the country. All of the promoters will be wanting you to come to their show and you'll know 'em all so it is real easy to get in."

### Cochran philosophy

Start your self-reliance in the country but don't depend on the country for your income is Mike Cochran's theme.

"Anybody who is going to move to the country needs to prepare while they're in the city," Mike says. Do a simple thing like buy an RV or a trailer house or something you can live in, and then go out to the country and rent or buy a little piece of land for the lowest down you can get. Put the trailer on it and buy a couple of those container sheds and set them out for a storage or extra bedrooms. Now you are living for relatively low rent so you can use the money you save up to invest in yourself which is your business.

"Maybe then you can move into your sales realm by getting items from



*Everything you ever wanted or think you might want someday.*

the city or making something at home. Assemble such things as kit radios or burglar alarms—or whatever—all week, then on weekends go to the shows and expos and sell whatever you've got. You might buy holsters wholesale for selling at gun shows. Buy electric trains and refurbish them. Or books or T-shirts, and market them. That's the easiest way to get out of the city. And once you become able to make ends meet living in your RV or trailer house, you can take the next step.

"Remember, if you want to save money, it is always easier to earn money first." Δ

# Convert dead space to closet space

By Oliver Del Signore

If there's one thing few homes have enough of, it's storage space. This is despite the fact that many home owners are fortunate to have spacious attics, full basements, garages, or storage rooms in which to store all the precious possessions they either can't bear to part with or forgot they own. All of these are good for large items or for things we use but once or twice a year. However, quickly accessible storage space within the living area, where there are no extremes of temperature or humidity, is often at a premium.

But anyone can build a storage closet that can be tucked under a stairwell, located at the end of a hallway, or even in a room that has extra floor space. To make my own, I decided to utilize some dead space at the end of a hallway (Figure 1).

## Measuring

My first step was to determine the dimensions of the new closet. I found I could install a closet whose outside dimensions would be 59½ inches long by 18½ inches deep. This would allow it to line up with but not block the stairwell on the opposite wall. Neither would it interfere with the existing window or with the door leading to the attic.

## Drawing the plans

It is far better to make mistakes on paper than it is to make them in the actual construction. That's why I always draw up plans, even for the smallest project. The plans can be as neat and ordered as an architectural rendering or as messy as some lines scratched on paper. The important things to remember are to note all measurements, the size and arrange-

ment of all components, and to include a detailed materials list so you won't be running back and forth to the local home center or hardware store (Table 1).

My plans consisted of two different drawings. The first was a stud layout for the two new walls, which also noted the position of the shelves (Figure 2). The second one showed how I expected the outside to look when I had finished (Figure 3).

As I laid out the wall studs, there were a number of important points I had to remember:

- When using 2x3 or 2x4 lumber, the studs should be placed 16 inches apart, center to center.
- The first 16-inch span is measured from either the existing wall or the outside corner of the new wall to the center of the first stud (Figure 4A).
- An extra stud is placed at the outside corner of the wall to help stiffen it (Figure 4B).
- If the inside will be finished, rather than leaving the studs exposed, an extra stud must be added at the corner to provide a place to nail or screw the wallboard or other finish material. This is called a return. Installing

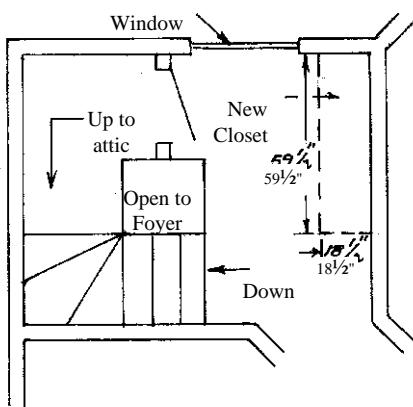


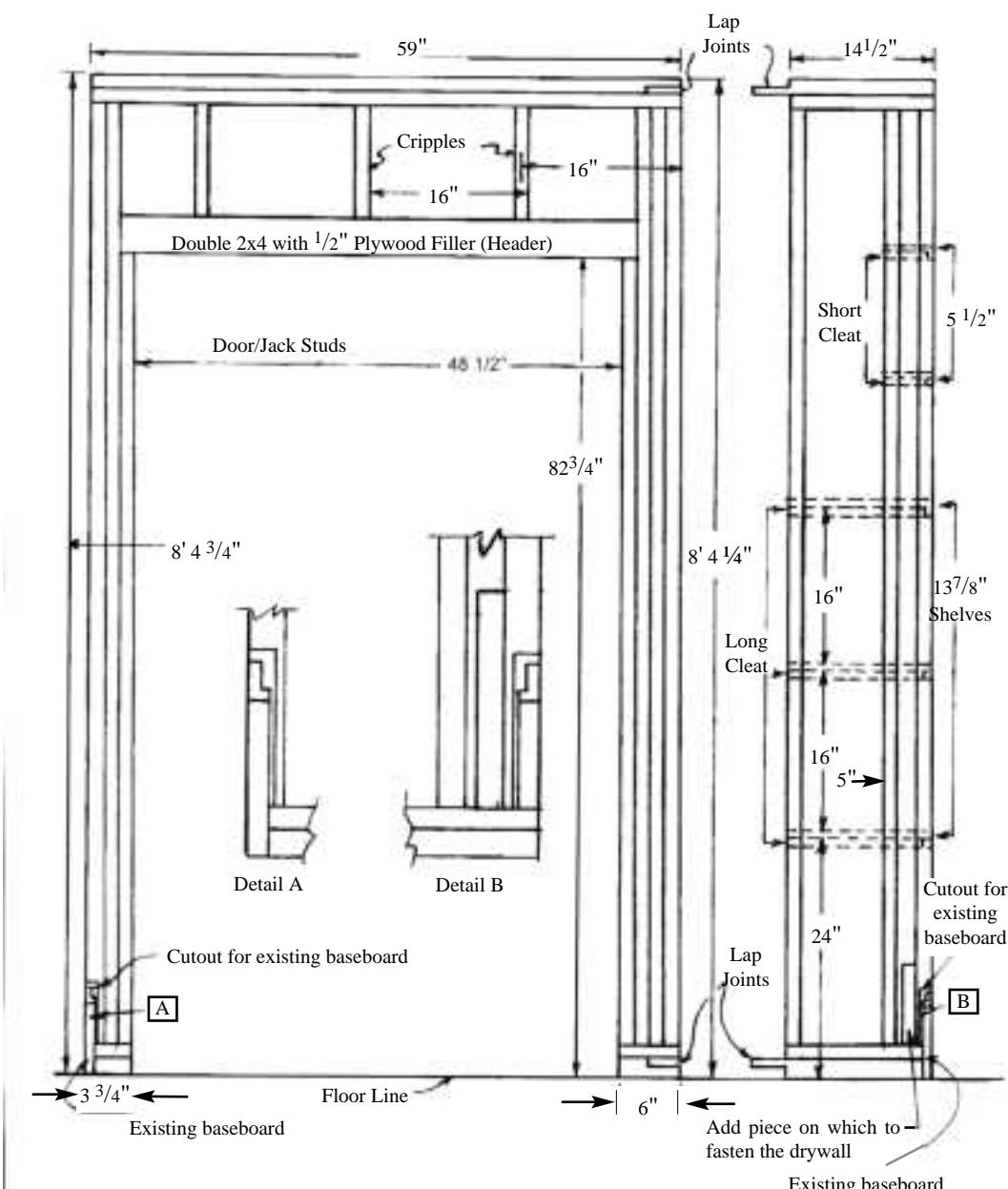
Figure 1. Dead space in my hallway  
I decided to turn into closet space

## Table 1. Materials list

16	2" x 4" x 8' KD stud
2	1" x 6" x 7' clear pine
1	1" x 6" x 5' clear pine
2	1" x 6" x 5' common pine
1	4½" x 3' colonial base
2	2½" x 8' colonial casing
1	2½" x 5' colonial casing
1	¾" 4' x 8' sheet luan plywood
5	¾" x ¾" x 8' ground
2	½" 4' x 8' drywall
1	10' metal corner bead
2	1³/₈" x 24" x 80" hollow core luan door
1	4' track kit for doors
1	gallon joint compound
1	roll joint tape
	assorted drywall screws 1⁵/₈", 2½", 3", 4"
	drywall nails 1½"
	finish nails 4d, 6d, 8d
	common nails 6d, 8d
6	4" toggle bolts
6	heavy flat washers
1	gallon Alkyd Primer
1	gallon latex finish paint
1	gallon polyurethane

a third stud at the corner of the long wall will further stiffen it as well as form the return for the inside finish (Figure 4C).

- The shelves must be supported on both ends and along the back by shelf cleats (Figure 5). If any shelves will not be as deep as the closet itself (usually the case with high shelves), a stud must be added at the appropriate depth to provide a place to which to nail the shorter shelf cleat(s) (Figure 4D). An alternative is to simply run all the end cleats the entire width of the closet.
- If the door casings are much wider than the 2¼-inch to 3½-



*Figure 2. Stud layout for the two new walls which also notes the position of the shelves*

inch widths, which are common today, an extra stud must be added next to the door frame to provide nailing for the outside edge of the casing (Figure 6). • Always check the manufacturer's rough opening recommendations for the door unit you will be installing. Generally speaking, to calculate the rough opening:

**Hinged doors:** add  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches to the width of the door and  $2\frac{5}{8}$  inches to the height of the door to allow for the frame.

**2 sliding doors:** add  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to the total width of both doors and add 2 inches to the height of the door. This allows for  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch finish material applied directly to the studs on both sides and along the top.

**Folding doors:** read the installation instructions for the particular type of door being installed.

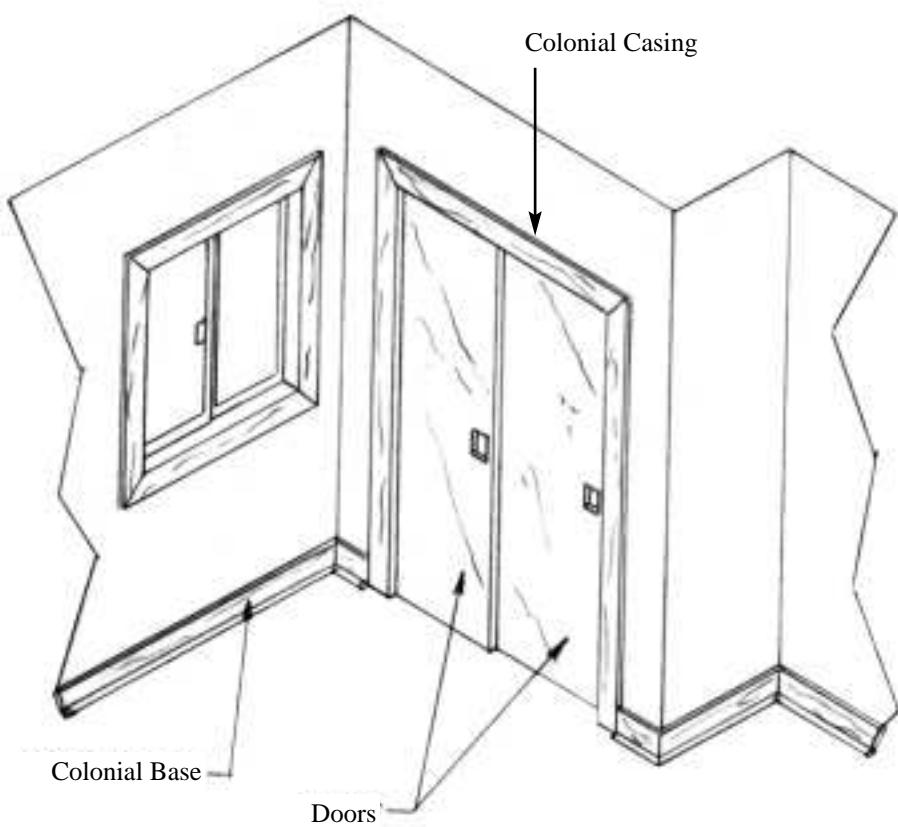
The ceiling height in the hallway varied from 8 feet  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches to 8 feet  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Such variation is not an unusual occurrence in an older home. Since the standard stud length is 8 feet, that meant I would either have to purchase 10-foot studs—at a significant premium and then waste about 20 inches of each one—or double up on both the top and bottom plates, then trim the standard studs to fit at each location. Being thrifty, and hating waste, I chose the latter option.

While doing the drawing which showed the finished view (Figure 3), I tried a number of different door arrangements. I finally settled on double, 24-inch sliding doors. The sliders would allow easy and complete access without having to be concerned with door swings.

If a light will be installed in the storage closet, now is the time to think about how to get the wires there and where to locate both the fixture and the switch.

## Purchasing materials

Nearly everyone who has ever purchased lumber has had the experience of buying nice, straight 2x4s, bringing them home and discovering the next day they had twisted and warped, making the whole job more difficult.



*Figure 3. The expected outside look of the closet when finished*

With lumber, as with most other things, you get what you pay for. Buy good grade studs, preferably kiln-dried.

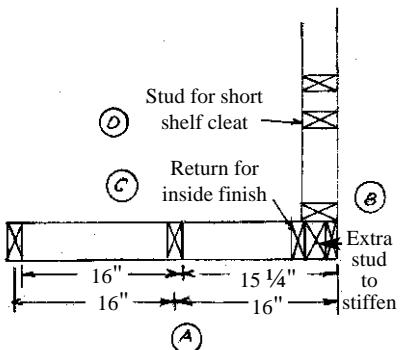
In addition to studs, I also purchased some clear 1x6 pine to finish the door opening, 4½-inch colonial style baseboard, 2¼-inch colonial style door casing, ½-inch drywall, metal corner

bead, two unhung 24-inch hollow core 1¾-inch luan doors and a track kit with which to hang them. For the top shelves I purchased 1x6 common pine, and for the bottom shelves a sheet of ¾-inch luan plywood.

I had plenty of nails and screws in the basement, as well as the joint compound, joint tape, and tools I would need to finish the walls—all leftovers from other projects.

## Layout

**Ceiling plate:** I placed my straight-edge flat against the ceiling along the existing long wall to establish a straight line, then placed my ruler against the drawn line and measured out to a distance of 18 inches from the wall in two locations (Figure 7A). After connecting the two marks, I measured 59 inches from the existing



*Figure 4. The placing of an extra stud at the outside corner of the wall to help stiffen it*

side wall, then used my framing square to draw a right angle for the corner (Figure 7B). I now had the outside line of the top plate.

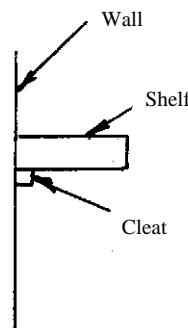
**Bottom plate:** To transfer the position down to the floor for the bottom plate, I used my plumb bob to drop a line from the exact point of the outside corner (Figure 7C). I also dropped from a point near where the new walls would meet the existing walls. Connecting the points with the straightedge gave me the lines on which to install the bottom plate so that it would be perfectly plumb (vertically even) with the top plate.

## Framing the plates

For stability, the top plate of the stud walls had to be fastened to the ceiling joists above it. I checked to determine which way they were running. As they ran perpendicular to the long wall of the closet, I knew I could fasten my top plate directly to them (Figure 8A). Had the ceiling joists been running parallel to the long wall, I would have searched for the strapping to which are fastened the ceiling laths in an old house or the blueboard or drywall in a newer home. (Figure 8B)

I cut the front piece 59-inches long and the side piece the full 18-inches long, both from the same eight-foot 2x4, then formed a half-lap joint on each piece (Figure 9). Once fastened together, this would help tie the two walls together for additional stability.

Next, I used 4-inch drywall screws to fasten the front plate to the ceiling.



*Figure 5. The supporting of a shelf with a shelf cleat*

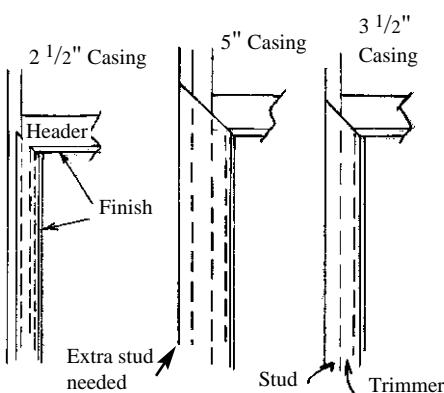


Figure 6. Adding an extra stud next to the door frame to provide nailing for the outside edge of the casing

Such long screws were required because I needed to go through the plate itself, the plaster, the old wood lath, and the strapping—all of which added up to three inches—in order to reach the joists. I could have used 20d or even 30d common nails, but I would have run the risk of compressing, cracking, or even pulverizing the plaster on the ceiling. Besides, swinging a hammer up and trying to drive a

large nail is so much harder than holding my power screwdriver and letting it do all the hard work. An additional benefit to using screws, not only to attach the plates but wherever possible, is that it makes taking the structure down much easier in the future, should I or a subsequent owner wish to do so. The screws went in easily with the help of my cordless driver. Had they not, I would have drilled some pilot holes through the plate, plaster, and lath, which would have allowed them to glide in with less trouble.

The short side plate went up next. I used two 3-inch screws to fasten the wall end to the strapping I knew would be above it. I then used three  $1\frac{5}{8}$ -inch screws to fasten the lap joint.

The floor plate presented a special challenge. Due to the wide door opening, the front pieces were very short—6 inches on one side with a lap joint and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches on the other.

Normally, I would simply lay a 2x4 running the full length, then cut out the piece for the door open-

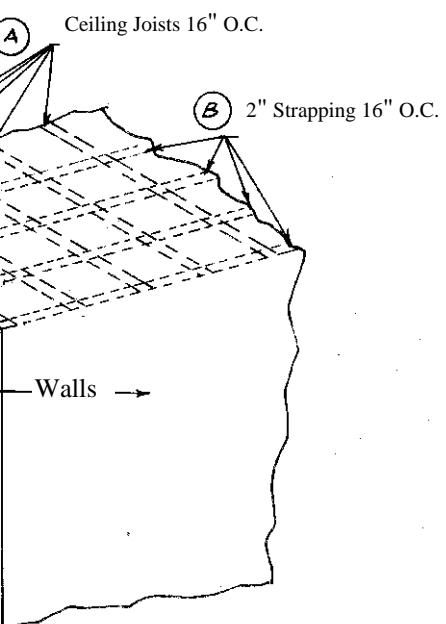


Figure 8. Fastening the ceiling plate to the ceiling joists above it

ing with a reciprocating saw, or hand saw, once all the wall studs had been installed. To do that here, however, could mar the finished floor. I solved the problem by first cutting a piece 59 inches and making the lap joint, as I did at the top. I then made partial cuts on the bottom of the plate where it would have to be trimmed later on (Figure 10). This way, when it was time to cut the area out, the saw blade would only need to go halfway through the plate. It would never even get near the finished floor.

I then cut the smaller plate to fit, fastening them both to the floor using  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch screws. I made sure to screw down the long plate **only** in the areas that would not be removed later.

The ends of the pieces for the second layer of the plates were cut square, without the lap joints, which were not necessary on this layer. They were fastened to the first layer, top and bottom, using  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch screws.

### Framing wall studs

The  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch difference in height from one side to the other meant that

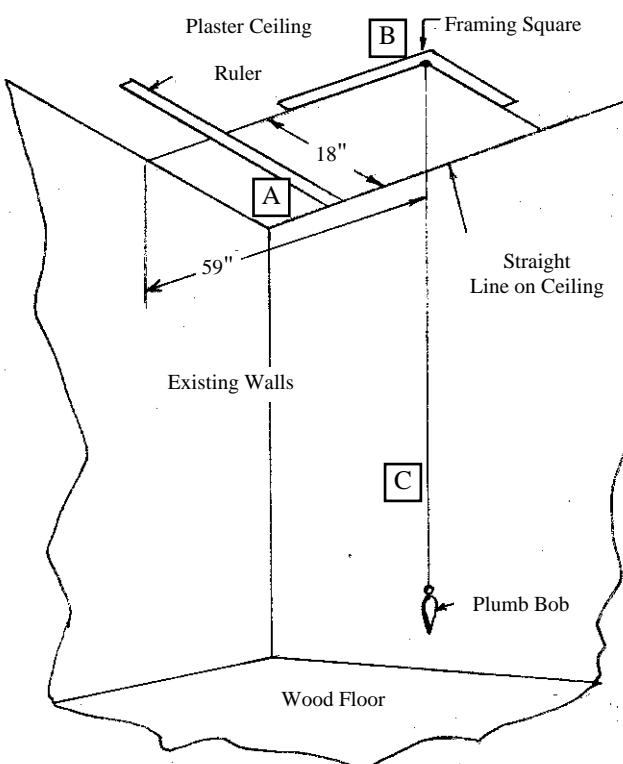
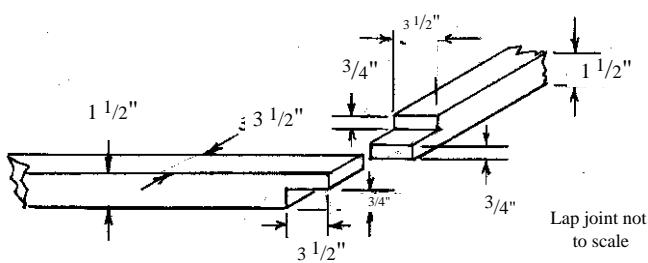


Figure 7. Layout of the ceiling and bottom plates



*Figure 9. Forming a lap joint to help tie the two walls together for additional stability*

the studs would have to be measured, cut and installed individually.

I worked first on the two studs which would lay against the existing walls, since they would need to be trimmed at the bottom to allow them to clear the existing baseboard (Figure 11, #1 & #2).

I did not try to scribe the studs to fit the profile of the baseboard. I simply made square cuts similar to the lap joints I had done earlier. I could have chosen to cut and remove the baseboard, but that would be far more work than trimming the studs to fit around it. It also left the baseboard intact in case the closet were ever removed in the future.

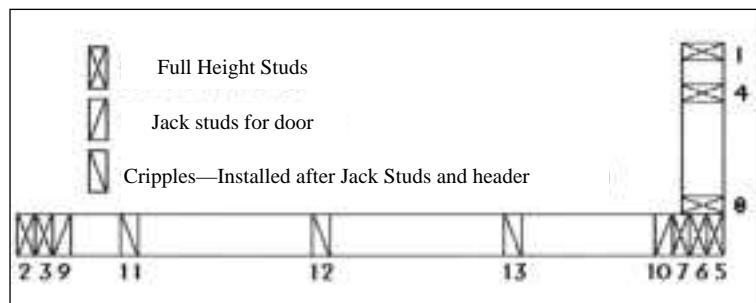
To the bottom of the end piece for the short wall (Figure 11, #1) I fastened a 12-inch long piece (see Figure 2) using 1 $\frac{5}{8}$ - and 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch screws. This would provide stability, good

I could not screw the new stud to an existing one, I decided to use three toggle bolts (Figure 12) on each stud in addition to toenailing the top and bottom to the plates. By adding the thickness of the stud (1 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches) and the thickness of the existing plaster and lath ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch) to the length of the wing on the bolt ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch) when it was folded, I determined that I needed bolts at least 3-inches long. I decided to buy the 4-inch size,

though, so the wing would not have to remain too close to the end of the bolt. I also purchased six heavy duty washers which I placed between the wing and the head of the bolt. These would allow me to tighten the bolts without the heads sinking into the wood.

Since my drill bit was not long enough to pass all the way through the stud and the wall, I temporarily tacked the two studs into position, then drilled holes just wide enough to allow the wings to pass through. Next, I removed the studs and drilled the rest of the way through the plaster and lath.

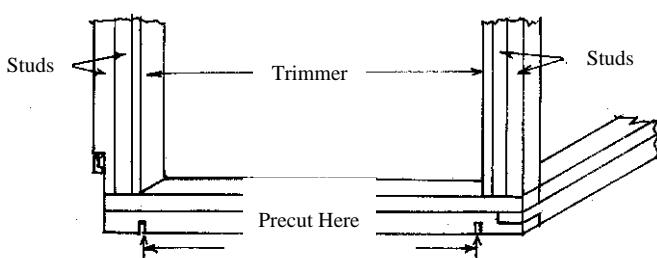
Replacing the studs in position, I used 8d nails to toenail them in place, then folded the wings against the shaft of the bolts and inserted them through the stud and wall until they spread open on the other side. I pulled the bolts forward until the wings pressed against the inside of the wall. I maintained that forward pressure by holding the washers with one hand as I used my electric screwdriver to turn the bolts until the head and washer were drawn in tight, thereby holding the new studs firmly against the fronts.



*Figure 11. Wall stud installation order*

I then installed the second stud on the long side near the wall (Figure 11 #3) as well as the middle stud on the short wall (Figure 11 #4).

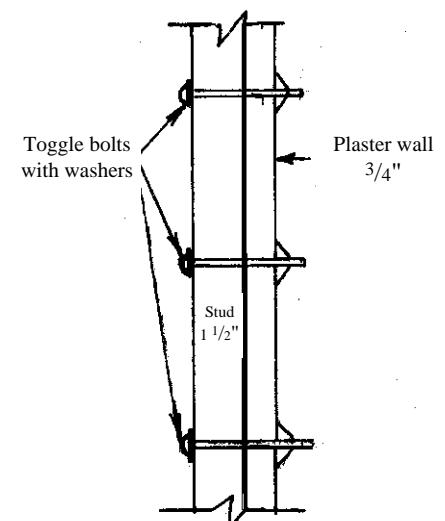
The four studs that formed the outside corner of the long side (Figure 11



*Figure 10. Precuts in the bottom plate to help prevent marring the finished floor during installation*

nailing, and an ample surface for fastening the drywall and baseboard finish.

Neither end stud met the wall where there was an existing wall stud. Since



*Figure 12. Using toggle bolts to affix the studs to the wall*

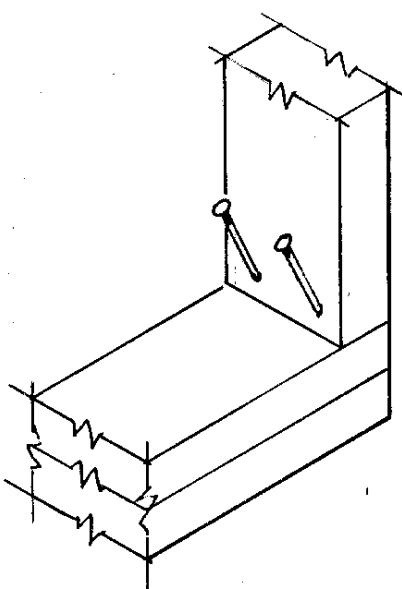


Figure 13. Toenailing the studs in the corners

#’s 5, 6, 7, 8) were installed one at a time. I measured, cut, then toenailed the corner stud (#5) to both the top and bottom plates using two 8d common nails on both of the long sides, at the top and at the bottom of the stud (Figure 13).

One at a time, the next two were toenailed using two 8d common nails at the top and bottom, then joined to the previous stud using two 2½" screws every two feet.

The door studs, also known as jack studs, which would be supporting the door header, were installed using only screws. Sets of two 2½-inch screws were spaced about 16 inches apart.

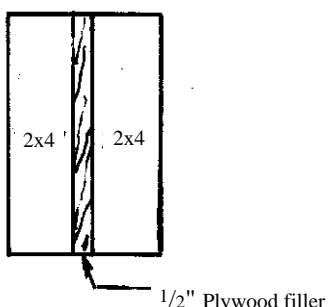


Figure 14. Plywood filler between the studs

The header itself was made of two 2x4s with a long piece of ½-inch plywood to fill out the depth and provide extra strength against sagging. These were all screwed together using 3-inch screws.

The header was installed on its “side” (the plywood filler in a vertical position) using two 8d nails on each side of both ends to toenail it to the abutting stud (Figure 14).

Finally, the short pieces, known as cripples, which run from the top of the header to the bottom of the top plate to provide nailing for the drywall were cut, then installed, making sure to keep them 16 inches on center.

It was now time to cut off the part of the bottom two plates that ran across the door opening. I used my reciprocating saw—sometimes known as a “sawzall.” I was very careful not to move too fast and not to tilt the blade so that it might hit the finished floor. An ordinary hand saw, of course, would have worked as well and would have exercised my arm muscles as a bonus.

## Drywall

Installing drywall is a two step process. The first step is to get it fastened to the wall. The second step is to use joint compound to fill and smooth all the joints, corners, and the depressions made by the nails or screws.

By following a few simple rules, a professional looking result can be achieved.

- Minimize the number of joints by planning the work. It is always better to install one large piece than two or more small pieces. Remember—every joint must be covered with joint tape, must have three or four applications of joint compound, and must be finish sanded. The fewer the number of joints, the less time and effort it will take to hide them.
- If small scrap pieces must be used, use them on the inside of

the closet where the finish will not be as visible.

- Always stagger end joints to minimize the likelihood of stress cracks in the future (Figure 15).
- Use the proper tools, both for installing the drywall and applying the joint compound.
- Take your time. You will have to live with the results of your efforts for many years.

And be sure to always wear a dust mask when cutting drywall or sanding the joint compound.

## Cutting

The easiest and fastest way to cut drywall is with a sharp utility knife. Using a straightedge or a drywall T-

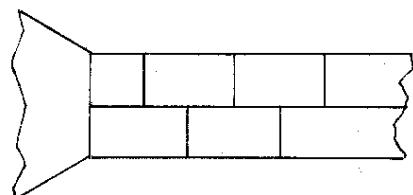


Figure 15. Staggered end joints will minimize the likelihood of stress cracks in the future

square, score the paper on one side, cutting slightly into the gypsum below. Slide a 2x4 under the sheet or slide the sheet over the edge of the table so that the score mark is even with the edge. Grip the drywall at the edge with both hands, then snap the gypsum core with a sharp downward motion (Figure 16). Turn the drywall over and cut the paper on the other side.

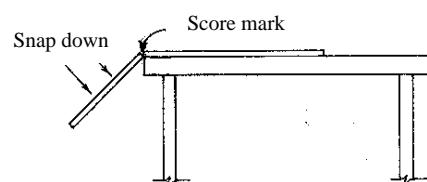
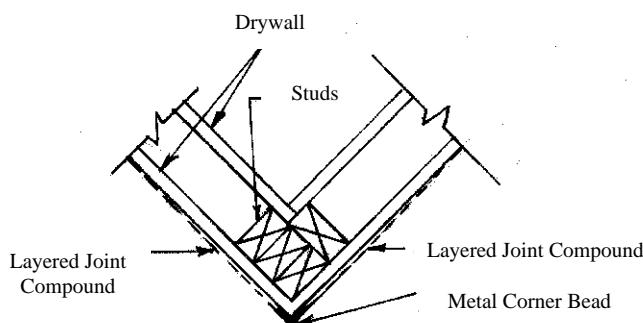


Figure 16. Cutting gypsum by first scoring then snapping the board

## Fastening

There are two ways to fasten the drywall to a wall or ceiling—nails and screws. I believe screws to be superior since they are far less likely to loosen over time and “pop” off the covering of joint compound. Screws are normally installed with a special, ratchet-



*Figure 17. Using a metal corner bead and layered joint compound, outside corners will look professionally done*

ing drill called a drywall gun or “Zip” gun. This tool has an adjustable collar ring that will set the screw just below the surface of the paper, but without breaking the paper or crushing the gypsum below it. It is possible to use a regular, variable speed drill to install the screws, but great care must be taken not to drive the screw in too far. That would break the paper, which is not good, since it is the paper that actually holds the board against the wall. Drywall guns can often be rented by the day from local building supply or rental centers.

If nails are to be used, bang the drywall nail in until the head just touches the paper, then give it one more blow to “dimple” the surface of the paper, creating a small, shallow crater which will later be filled with joint compound, then sanded smooth. Those who have never before done this should start with the inside of the closet. It is better to learn and make any mistakes there where they will not show.

Had my walls been 8-feet high or less, I could have avoided having a joint on the sidewall. Since they were

higher, I needed a small piece 4½ inches high.

Normally, it is best to avoid such small pieces but I decided to use the small strip along the floor since it would be covered by the baseboard moulding.

I cut a strip 8 feet by 18 inches and another 4½ inches by 18 inches. I installed the small piece first, along the floor, then used that piece to hold up the larger piece while I got a few screws into it. Starting at one side and working toward the other I used 1 5/8-inch screws to fasten the drywall to

the studs. I spaced the screws every 10 to 12 inches on inside studs and every 6 to 8 inches at the edges.

The front of the closet I did differently. First, I cut a piece 59 x 18 inches to cover the area from the top of the door opening to the ceiling. Then I cut two pieces, one 3¾ by 84¾ inches and the other 6 by 84¾ inches for the small pieces of wall on both sides of the door opening. Thus, I was able to cover the whole outside with less than one 4x8 sheet of drywall.

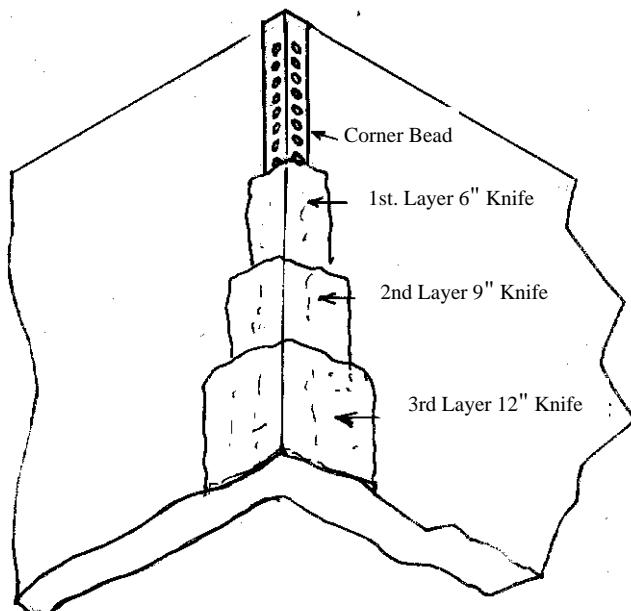
I followed the same procedure on the inside of the closet except that I did the front wall first. That allowed the widest fastening surface on the return stud.

## Corner bead

Outside corners are almost always covered with a metal bead which provides a crisp, clean corner line. The corner bead also helps to protect the corner from damage should something bang into it. It must be applied perfectly plumb and with the corner rib slightly higher than both wall surfaces. This will allow the joint compound to fill in the resulting slight valley and be feathered out so that the wall looks perfectly flat.

A good level is essential for getting the bead plumb. I began by laying the bead against the corner. Starting at the bottom, I made sure the sides were flat against the wallboard with the rib snug to the corner. This left a slight valley on each side if I placed a straightedge against the bead and the wallboard (Figure 17). I then hammered in a drywall nail at the bottom of each side. I used 1½-inch nails so that they would penetrate an inch into the stud below the drywall.

Next, I put my level vertically against the corner rib. Adjusting the bead until it was plumb, I tacked it with a nail on both sides every two



*Figure 18. Applying joint compound in successive layers using the 6-, 9-, and 12-inch knives*

feet. I continued this all the way to the ceiling, then went back, double checking and nailing the bead every six inches on both sides.

## Applying joint compound

Thin layers are the secret to successfully applying joint compound. If applied too thickly, the wall will end up with noticeable “waves” or ridges that take forever to sand smooth.

The most important tools for compounding are the 6-, 9- and 12-inch taping knives. Using these, you can achieve professional looking results with just a little practice. If you have never applied joint compound before, practice on the inside of your closet where even major mistakes will not be readily visible.

The other materials needed are the compound itself, paper joint tape, a small bucket, trough or other means of holding small amounts of compound as you are applying it, and medium grit (100-120) sandpaper.

Apply a 6-inch wide coat of joint compound over the corner bead on each side. When dry, sand off any ridges with the sandpaper and a sanding block. Use a very light pressure when sanding. Try not to go over bare paper so as to avoid scratching it, and be careful not to let the sandpaper dig into the dried compound. If you do happen to gouge the compound, simply apply more, in thin layers, until it's even with the adjacent area.

Apply a second thin coat using the 9-inch knife, making sure to feather out the edges to nothing. When dry, apply the last thin coat with either the 9- or 12-inch knife, again feathering the edges (Figure 18).

## Joints

Using the 6-inch knife and, allowing it to straddle the joint, apply a thin coat the full length of the joint. Next, starting at the top or on one side, press the paper tape into the compound with the knife. Make sure to keep it flat and

to avoid tearing the paper. Immediately apply a second thin coat of compound over the tape, still using the 6-inch knife. Do this gently so as not to disturb or tear the tape. When completely dry, knock off any ridges and apply another coat with the 9-inch knife. When dry, repeat with the 12-inch knife.

## Inside corners

Fold the tape lengthwise to a sharp crease. Apply a thin coat of compound to both sides of the corner. Carefully press the tape into the still wet compound with your fingers, getting it even on both sides for the whole length. Then, use the 6-inch knife to smooth it and feather out the compound and let dry.

Apply the second coat with the 6-inch knife again and the third with the 9-inch knife. A fourth coat is not usually necessary, but it certainly will not hurt to apply it if you want to. I did not bother as it was inside the closet.

## Nail/screw dimples

Dimples require two to three coats. Apply the compound with the 6-inch knife and allow to dry. If you are careful and do not allow extra compound to stay on the paper surrounding the dimple you may not have to sand when it is dry. There will invariably be a small crater or crack in the middle of the spot where the compound shrunk. Apply the second, third, or even fourth coats, as necessary, allowing each to dry before applying the next. After the final coat, gently sand and smooth.

## Final finish

Drywall should always be finished with paint, even if you will be applying wallpaper. One coat of oil-based or alkyd primer and one or two finish coats of latex will provide a good base on which wallpaper can be applied and, someday, removed without destroying the drywall underneath.

## Shelves

This closet would serve as a catch-all space for a mix of items that included boxes of books, magazines and clothes, games—pretty much anything and everything we wanted to be quickly accessible but had no space for in the bedrooms.

The bottom three shelves would be 13 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches wide while the top two would be 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches to allow for easy access. I had purchased 1x6 pine for the top shelves. Since it is factory milled to  $\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$  inches I would only have to cut it to the proper length. For the wide shelves, I had chosen a 5-ply,  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch luan plywood both for strength and for the luan finish which is smooth and attractive.

I used my ruler to measure up from the floor, marking the height of the top of each shelf cleat at one spot on the wall. Next, I used my 4' level to draw a level line along the back wall for each shelf. Since the side walls were much too short to use my 2' level, I set a small torpedo level on a straight scrap of lumber and used that to extend the lines onto the side walls.

These days, one can spend twenty or thirty dollars for an electronic stud locator that will find the studs behind most plaster, wood and even tile walls. Being as thrifty as I am, however, I used a 6d finish nail and a hammer to locate each stud in the existing walls. I was careful to make the probing holes just below one of the lines I had drawn, so that the holes would be covered up by the shelf cleat, once it was installed. I made a small pencil mark above the level line at each stud location, so I would know where to put the nails or screws I would use to fasten the cleats to the walls. Once I had marked all the stud locations along one of the level lines, I used my level to transfer the location marks to all the other shelf lines.

As I was concerned about doing too much banging on an old plaster wall, the cleats were then cut to length and fastened to the wall using 3" drywall

screws instead of nails. Using the screws involved an extra step. I had to drill a pilot hole and countersink for each screw so that the shaft would not split the cleat and the head would be able to sit flush with the surface.

I cut the bottom three shelves from the sheet of plywood using my  $7\frac{1}{4}$ -inch circular saw and a metal straight-edge which I clamped to the plywood as a guide. First I cut the sheet to a length of  $54\frac{7}{8}$  inches. That would make the shelves  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch shorter than the actual length of the space which would allow the shelves to be installed and removed without binding. I then ripped the piece into three  $13\frac{7}{8}$  inches wide strips then gave all the edges a good sanding, both to smooth them and to slightly round them, which would help prevent splintering in the future.

The top shelves were easy since I needed only to cut the  $1 \times 6$  stock to the proper length, then sand and slightly round the edges.

## Doors

With the shelves done, I moved on to the doors. First I had to install the pine finish over the exposed studs that formed the door opening. I cut the top piece first, then the sides. I did not bother to miter the corners since all but a small strip of the front edge would be covered later by the door mouldings. The pieces had to be ripped down to a width of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, which would cover the stud and both layers of drywall. I did this on my table saw, but I could also have done it using the rip guide that came with my circular saw.

Once ripped, I sanded the cut edge a bit to remove the roughness. I didn't bother making it perfectly smooth since I would install the pieces with the cut edges toward the inside.

Keeping the front even with the edge of the drywall, I used 6d finish nails, which I hammered in until they were almost flush with the surface of the wood, to fasten the top, then both

sides. When all three were installed, I went back and used a nail set to set the nails  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch below the surface of the wood.

I then followed the instructions that came with the track kit. The top track went up first, then the rollers were fastened to the tops of the doors. I tilted the doors up onto the tracks and, once again, followed the instructions on how to adjust them so that they would fit squarely against each side.

## Mouldings

Next came the mouldings. I cut and fit the moulding around the door first since the base moulding had to butt up against it. I started by marking a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch setback in two places on the front edge of both sides and the top (Figure 19A). Using my level to bridge the two marks on each side, I drew both a vertical and horizontal line at each corner to locate the exact spot where the inside of the side and top mouldings would meet (Figure 19B).

Taking a length of the door moulding, I positioned it across the  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch marks on the top edge, then transferred the two corner marks onto it and marked the direction of the cuts. At the miter box, I was very careful to make the 45 degree angle cuts just at the corner marks.

I tacked the piece in place using 4d finish nails along the inside edge, making sure that it lined up exactly with the setback and corner marks. I then took another length of door moulding. Placing one end on the floor and aligning the moulding with the setback

marks on the left side of the door frame, I carefully marked the inside edge where it met the top piece. I repeated that for the right side of the door frame, then cut both pieces.

My trial fit showed me that the left side fit perfectly but that the right side was just a hair too long. Rather than mess around with the miter cut, I chose to remove the small amount necessary from the bottom of the piece, where it would meet the floor, since that would be an easy square cut.

Once everything fit nicely, I nailed them in place using 4d finish nails on the thin, inside edge and 6d finish nails along the outside where the wood was thicker and where I would have to penetrate the drywall before hitting the stud below.

Only two pieces of base moulding, those which formed the outside corner, were required since the door moulding on the left side butted against the existing base moulding on the old wall.

First, I scribed the end which would go against the existing moulding, in order to ensure a tight fit. I used my dividers, but I could also have used a pencil taped to a stick. With my block plane, I shaved the end of the piece down to the line, then checked to

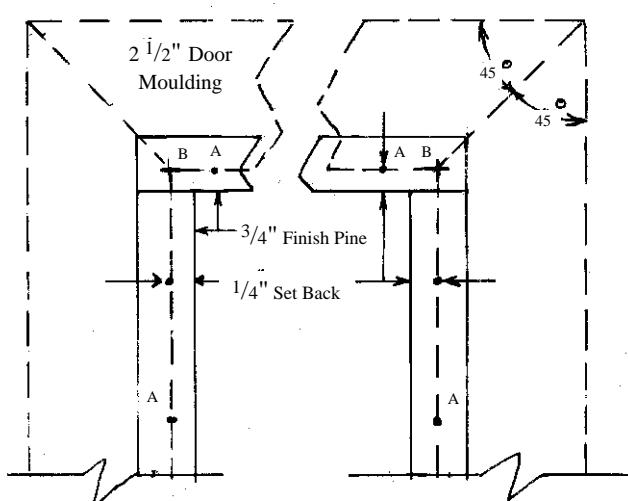
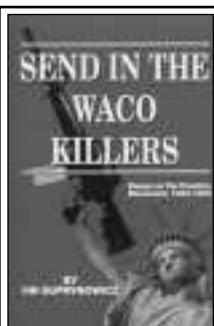


Figure 19. By accurately measuring where the mouldings would meet, you can ensure a professional looking finish.



## SEND IN THE WACO KILLERS

**T**hree times the International Society of Newspaper Editors has included Vin Suprynowicz in their list of the 12 top weekly editorial writers in North America. For years his shoot-from-the-hip style has opened the eyes of thousands to government abuse of our liberties. In this book, Send in the Waco Killers, he blends material taken from his syndicated column with new commentary to give the reader a detailed, reporter's-eye-view of how the rights and freedoms of Americans are being subverted.

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make sure it fit perfectly. Holding the piece in place, I marked the spot just at the corner, then used my miter box to make a 45 degree angle cut. I repeated the process on the short piece for the front, then nailed both pieces using 6d finish nails.

All that remained now was the finish work.

### Paint & varnish

I decided to stain the doors and mouldings to match the color of the existing woodwork in the area. I removed the doors and brought them down to the cellar where I could lay them flat to work on them. I lightly sanded them on all surfaces, including the top and bottom edges, using 220 grit paper, then vacuumed the dust. Next, I used a tack cloth to lightly rub over the surface of the doors to remove every last speck of sawdust that the vacuum might have missed. Had I not done so, the sanding dust on the surface of the doors could have ruined the finish I would be applying.

Donning a pair of rubber gloves, I used a small, lint free rag to wipe the stain onto the front side of each door and all the edges. I like to do the front side first so that any drips I might miss will end up on the bottom edge. Since the bottom is the back of the door they will not be easily visible. I let the stain sit on the doors for about 30 minutes, according to the directions on the can, then used a clean, lint free cloth to lightly wipe down the doors, removing any excess that had not been absorbed. The doors would now have to dry for several hours so I decided to work on the mouldings.

The first step was to set all the nails in the mouldings as I had done on the pieces for the door opening. I then sanded it all using 150 grit paper and then 240 grit paper for a smooth finish. As with the doors, I vacuumed, then used the tack cloth to remove all the dust.

I used a brush to apply the stain, rather than a cloth, since I wanted to

avoid getting stain on the painted walls. After 30 minutes, I rubbed it down with a lint free cloth, just as I had done with the doors.

When all the stain was completely dry, it was time to apply the first coat of varnish. I chose a satin urethane varnish because it would be durable and would match the gloss level of the existing woodwork in the hall. I used a two inch brush and applied a thin coat, being careful not to leave puddles on the doors or drip marks on the vertical surfaces of the mouldings. I also chose to varnish all the shelves to seal the wood and help prevent future splintering.

**Hint: To avoid troublesome air bubbles which can mar the finish, do not use the rim of the can to scrape the excess varnish off the brush after dipping it. Instead, tap the brush on the inside surface of the can. Also, after you have finished a surface, lightly drag the tip of the brush from one end to the other, over the whole surface, to even out any brush marks.**

The first coat of varnish took about 8 hours to dry completely. I sanded it very lightly, as per the directions on the can, then vacuumed, used the tack cloth and applied the second coat of varnish.

I let the second coat dry for 24 hours. Then, I turned the doors over and repeated the steps I had done on the front.

Each of the shelves also received two coats of varnish to seal them.

The nail holes on the woodwork were filled using a special colored wax pencil which is widely available at home centers and hardware stores.

The walls were primed, inside and out, with an alkyd primer, then finished with two coats of latex paint.

The next day, after the shelves and doors had completely dried and cured, I re-hung the doors, installed the shelves and the closet was complete.

Forty-eight hours later it was jammed full. Δ

# How to make fruit picking easy

By Robert L. Williams

**I**t's great to have fruits of all sorts growing in the back yard or along the roadside, and it's hard to beat the taste of an apple or peach picked right off the tree on a sunny day. The only problem is that sometimes the best fruit seems to be in the very top of the tree, and you either have to climb the tree and risk breaking limbs (the tree's and yours) or hauling a ladder to the site and climbing it.

As kids we used to rock the trees—in more ways than one. We'd try to shake the tree hard enough to dislodge the apples or other fruit, and at times we'd even climb the tree in order to get more shaking done. This was not a solution, however; the damage to the tree was too great, and the dislodged fruit would be damaged by the fall and would not keep more than a day or so.

So we made our own fruit-picker. Total cost is under \$2, and the time needed is about half an hour—unless you have to cut the handles, as we did—and still do.



Fastening the can to the top of the pole

You need an empty tin can with the top cut out of it, and you will also need two or three long and slender bolts with wing nuts. That's about it, other than the handle, which can be made of almost anything from metal pipes to slender saplings.

Here's how to make the fruit-picker. Start with the can. If you want to pick only one apple or peach or pear at a time, you can use a small can, such as the can used to hold corn, green beans, or fruit in the supermarket. If you want to pick several of the best fruits at one whack, use an empty and large grapefruit or orange juice can.

Be sure the top is cut completely away. A kitchen can opener will do the trick nicely. Now use tin shears or hacksaw (you can even use scissors, but don't let your wife catch you doing it) and cut from the top straight down for about an inch or two. The exact length does not matter.

Now make another cut to the side of the first cut and about half an inch or so from it (again, the exact distance is unimportant, but the cut should not be more than an inch away). Bend the tab between the two cuts out from the side of the can and snip it off. If you prefer, you can make a vee-shaped cut and the tab is cut away with the second cut.



Cutting the notch in the top of the metal can

Now you need to fasten the can to a long pole or pipe. You can punch two holes in the can on the side opposite the slot you cut out about two and three inches from the top. Lay the pole on the ground and lay the can on top of the pole so that you can drive nails (with large heads, to keep from pulling out) through the metal and into the pole. You can also use screws and a long-handled screwdriver for an easier and more stable hold. Drill pilot holes at an angle and then start the screws.

You are now in business. To pick fruit, simply hold the pole and can up and slip the opening in the top of the can under the fruit. Be sure that the stem slips into the groove or notch you cut, and then push upward. The pressure of your push causes the apple to wedge against the side of the can at the point of the notch, but because the apple is too large to go through the



Drilling the holes for the extension pole



*Attaching the extension pole*

opening the stem breaks and the apple drops softly into the can.

You can lower the pole and retrieve your fruit, or you can pick two or

three more apples or peaches and retrieve all of them at once.

But the odds are that the pole still will not reach the top of the tree where some of the best fruit is growing. So here you make an extension.

To do so, lay the end of a second pole so that it overlaps the bottom end of the first pole by about a foot. Drill a hole through both poles and then slide long and slender bolts through the holes using a wing nut to tighten the two poles together.

There is no limit as to how many extensions you can add, as long as you have the strength to lift them. What we have found to work well is a two-by-two strip of wood. We cut these with a chain saw from leftover materials from our backyard lumber operation where we cut our lumber with a chain saw.

The advantage of the two-by-two over a pole is that because the dimensions are the same, as opposed to the pole which is large at the bottom and small at the top, the two-by-two strip weighs less and is easier to attach to another strip.

That's all there is to it. Consider that most fruit trees do not reach enormous heights. You can connect two or three ten-foot sections and reach the tops of most reasonable fruit trees. The weight is not great, and the only real problem is that of lowering the poles without awkwardness. The trick here is to have a helper who can take the can end of the poles, remove the fruit, and stash it in a basket.

But if you have no helper, you can still do the work alone. This method will not, of course, be suitable for picking the fruit in



*Using the extended pole and picker*

## **Storm Front**

*the west wind*

*whips*

*the cathedral bells*

*into one long clang*

*that reverberates through thunder*

*and lightning*

*and hail*

*then calms*

*to a quaking*

*ring of thunderheads*

*drifting east*

*fading into*

*a rainbow finale*

*of gentled*

*chimes*

**Sheryll Nelms  
Azle, TX**

an entire orchard. This is good only for backyard fruit trees.

Remember, too, that you can reach the lower fruit without any trouble and will need the picker only for the hard-to-reach limbs.

So invest a few pennies, make the picker, and eliminate the shaking and climbing. △

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# No worrying about fire blight with Orient and Kieffer pears

By Alice Brantley Yeager  
(Photos by James O. Yeager)

**E**veryone likes a good success story, and if I were called upon to name the most successful tree in our small orchard I'd have to say it's the Orient pear closely followed by its hale and hearty relative, the Kieffer. Both of these varieties have stood the test of time, giving us plenty of fruit for pies, preserves, salads, etc.

Pears with smooth flesh such as Bartlett have great taste and texture appeal, but I gave up long ago trying to grow those. I finally became convinced that no matter how I tried to follow the advice of the experts, Bartletts with their poor resistance to fire blight are not for southwestern Arkansas (Zone 8), as well as a number of other areas. Bartletts seem to do best along the Pacific coast and in northern states east of the Mississippi River.

Folks who live where fire blight is not a problem should count their blessings as it definitely puts a damper on trying to grow a number of fruit trees and ornamentals. There is virtually no way for the average gardener to cope with it other than to seek out varieties that have high resistance to the blight. The first signs of trouble usually show up during wet spring seasons when fire blight makes its appearance in the form of blackened blossoms and tips of branches that look as though they have been scorched by fire. The affected parts turn black, bend into a wilted position, and rapidly die back.

There are so many agents helping to spread the blight—bees and other insects, wind-blown rain, etc—that there is no feasible way of preventing

contagion. Some authorities recommend spraying for blossom control and pruning to save the unaffected branches. If the spring is a relatively dry one, spraying is helpful. In our area, spring is accompanied with plen-



*Pear trees in spring are a feast for the eyes and a boon to beekeepers. The trees usually bloom late enough to avoid frost damage.*

ty of rain either in the form of showers or storms, and spraying is a wasted effort. This year, for good measure, we're reaping some of El Nino's erratic behavior. As for pruning, my experience with blight-prone trees has been that I prune back more of the branches than grow in a season. Progress in reverse!

Fire blight is a capricious disease. There are times when it will only affect the blossoms of a tree, as in the

case of a Maxine pear in our orchard. The Maxine (very much like a Bartlett pear and advertised to be blight resistant) apparently has a certain amount of resistance as it seemed to be doing well for a few years, although its crops of pears were scant. Now the blossoms turn black as soon as they start to drop their petals, giving the tree the appearance of having been dabbed with black paint. No other part

of the tree is affected, but there's no hope of fruit without blossoms. So, when time permits, I'm considering making pear-wood picture frames.

Some years ago I read about a pear called the Orient in a southern grower's catalog. The part of the description that stood out to me was "highly resistant to fire blight." I embarked on another pear trial and have never regretted it, as the Orient grew with vigor, produced a few pears its third year, and has been going strong ever since with no fire blight.

Orient pears are not as fine grained as the Bartletts, but many of the Orient fruits will weigh a pound a piece. They begin ripening here about mid-July and finish up 4-5 weeks later. This is an advantage as we don't suddenly find ourselves faced with a tree full of ripe fruit to process all at once. The fruit is excellent when canned in light syrup for dessert or salad use, but is a little too juicy for preserves or pear honey.

Most pears are ready to pick when they may be snapped off by lifting them up and having them break away easily from the limbs. The best way to enjoy fresh pears is to harvest them when they will break away, as mentioned, putting them in a cool place inside the house for a few days. When they reach a less firm, more aromatic stage, they are ready to be eaten. The Orients are best for canning, however,



*Fire blight can be devastating to many trees and shrubs. Here the blight has blackened a major portion of a young Seckel pear tree necessitating removal of a large part of its growth.*

while they are firm and first picked from the tree.

Sometimes life plays tricks on gardeners. Happy with the success of our first Orient tree, I ordered another one. Apparently the new tree was mislabeled as it turned out to be a Kieffer. (It's hard to tell the difference between standard pear trees until they reach fruit-bearing age.) The only thing that kept me from ousting the Kieffer was that I didn't have time to remove it when I discovered the mistake.

The undesired Kieffer, apparently aware that it was living in jeopardy, made great haste to begin bearing heavy crops of pears that were excellent for making pear preserves and pear honey (see recipe). Having redeemed itself, the Kieffer is still in the orchard. Kieffers are drier pears

than the Orients, so each makes up for the other's shortcomings. Kieffers are also highly resistant to fire blight. Notice the survival of abandoned pear orchards around the countryside where old home places have been. The hard-as-a-rock Kieffers may not be as highly regarded by pear lovers as the Bartletts, but they're survivors and they produce where others will not. I have never seen a Kieffer tree with fire blight.

As a general rule, pear trees should be planted in poor soil, as very fertile soil increases the likelihood of fire blight attack. Coupled with plenty of rain, causing rapid growth, rich soil works hand in hand with the blight.

Pear trees don't usually require a great deal of pruning. Weak limbs having a tendency to droop toward the ground should be removed along with any dead wood that occurs. As with any fruit tree, branches that rub together should be thinned to prevent scars and rotten limbs. When trees are heavily laden with fruit, limbs should be propped up with some type of support that will not harm the bark.

Pear trees are like roses in that they do not like wet feet. They should be planted in a well drained, open spot with no big trees nearby. Soil should have moisture-retaining qualities, but not boggy or subject to creek or river overflows. Pear trees need room to develop their potential and should be

planted about 25 feet apart. Orients and Kieffers are long term investments as they will begin bearing in 3-5 years and will be around 25-75 years if properly attended.

If possible, a tree should be planted when first received from the nursery. (Most nurseries include specific instructions regarding planting). I have often received dormant trees when weather did not permit immediate planting and I have found the best thing to do is to place the shipment in a cool room where it can remain for a few days and not dry out.

When ready to place a tree in a selected site, one should always study the root system by gently spreading the roots out from their cramped shipping container. Cleanly cut off any damaged roots. If tree is in bad shape, immediately notify the shipper, as most nurseries will replace damaged



*The old hard-as-a-rock Kieffer pear may not be as large as some varieties of pears, but it has stood the test of time. No fire blight here.*

stock if informed soon after shipment is received.

The hole should be dug about six inches wider than the root span so that feeder roots may have a good chance to develop and spread out. Depth of hole may be judged by the soil line on the tree. Place tree in hole and fill about halfway up with pulverized soil (no clods). Amply water the soil down so that it settles, leaving no air pockets. Finish filling the hole with soil and water again.

Some of us live in drought prone areas and, as a precaution, I always make a small levee about three feet in diameter around a new tree. This levee will help to direct water to the roots when needed. An organic mulch of leaves, straw, etc, also helps to retain moisture. Even with mature trees, it is well to give the ground underneath the trees an occasional slow, thorough soaking during dry conditions, particularly if the trees are laden with fruit.



*There is very little damage, if any, to fruit when picked with this type of picker. A long handle (ours is bamboo), gives easy access to out-of-reach fruit such as the Orient pears shown here.*



*Orient pears on the left have been canned in quarters for use in salads or desserts. Pear honey on the right is a delicious spread made from Kieffer pears.*

To avoid trunk borer trouble, I generously sprinkle wood ashes around the base of our fruit trees during winter. A cupful is plenty for a young tree.

Although most pear trees are self-pollinating, it is advisable to plant more than one variety to increase production, particularly if there are no other pear trees within a quarter mile of your orchard. There are fringe benefits to Orients and Kieffers, as they are outstanding additions to the spring landscape when in bloom and a boon to beekeepers. Moreover they always seem to bloom late enough to escape frost damage. Late autumn brings forth a different colorful display when the leaves turn from green to golden bronze.

I urge anyone who has given up in disgust on trying to raise good pears to give the Orients and Kieffers a chance. They'll hang in there!

## **Some sources for trees**

Orient—Johnson Nursery, Route 5, Box 29-J, Ellijay, GA 30540.  
Kieffer—Stark Brothers, P.O. Box 10, Louisiana, MO 63353.

## **Pear honey**

Pare and core hard-ripe Kieffer pears. Cut in chunks small enough to easily feed through food grinder fitted with coarse blade. To each quart of ground pears add the following:

3 cups sugar
Juice of one lemon
Grated rind of one-half lemon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

Boil mixture in stainless steel, porcelain, or graniteware pot stirring frequently until thickened (Do not use aluminum). When desired thickness is achieved, immediately put in hot, sterilized jars and seal. Remember that this is a spread and should not be overcooked to a jelly stage.

A tasty variation is to substitute orange and nutmeg for lemon and ginger. Δ

# Recipes from my mother's kitchen

By Richard Blunt

One of my earliest and fondest childhood memories is of my mother and me walking nearly a mile down the road from our house, in the rain, to deliver a fresh baked batch of Hamentaschen (pronounced hamen-tashin) cookies. We were taking them to a Jamaican family that had just moved into our neighborhood. It was in the early spring, and the gastronomically festive Jewish holiday of Purim (pronounced poor-EEM) was being celebrated in many of our neighbors' homes. It happened that another one of my mother's close friends had just given her the recipe for Hamentaschen and my mom could not wait to make a batch. A new family moving into the neighborhood was a perfect reason for sharing her new recipe. Despite never having eaten a pastry like Hamentaschen before, the gift was well received by our new neighbors and enjoyed especially by me and their two kids.

## Hamentaschen

Hamentaschen is only one of many delicious desserts associated with Purim, the festival that celebrates the deliverance of the Jews from a massacre in the Persian Empire. The dessert is named for Haman, the malicious chief minister to the King of Persia, who devised the failed plot to kill all of the Jews. He wore a three pointed hat, hence the symbolic three pointed cookie. Unfortunately, this is a holiday that is little noticed by many today. But in the neighborhood where I grew up it was a big deal, and it's carnival spirit affected everyone regardless of faith. For my mother, Purim, like Christmas and Easter, was a prime opportunity to jump into the kitchen and work with a host of new foods that were shared with her by her many friends in our neighborhood.

This recipe contains a formula for making the traditional poppy seed filling, from scratch. If you find yourself short of time, a 12-ounce can of Solo brand poppy seed filling, or prune filling, are good substitutes. For the best results, both the dough and the filling should rest in the refrigerator overnight before preparing the cookies for baking.

### Cookie dough:

2 cups all purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 lb. margarine
2 Tbsp. honey
2 eggs
grated rind of one orange
1/2 cup finely ground pecans
2 Tbsp. Lairds Applejack or brandy



Richard Blunt

### Filling:

1 cup poppy seeds
4 Tbsp. raisins
3/4 cup apple juice
3 Tbsp. honey
4 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. grated lemon rind
1 1/2 Tbsp. margarine
1 Tbsp. Lairds Applejack or brandy
1/3 cup finely ground pecans

### Method (for the cookie dough):

1. Combine the flour, baking powder and sugar in a large bowl. Stir with a wire whisk to blend the ingredients.
2. Using a pastry blender or two knives, cut the margarine into the flour until the mixture resembles coarse oatmeal.
3. In a separate bowl blend the honey, eggs, grated orange rind, ground pecans and Applejack. Gently stir this mixture into the flour. Continue stirring only until all of the ingredients are incorporated.
4. Shape the dough into a ball, dust it lightly with flour, wrap it loosely in waxed paper and place it in a gallon size ziplock plastic bag. Refrigerate the dough for at least six hours.

### Method (for the filling):

1. In a heavy bottom sauce pan combine the poppy seeds, raisins, and apple juice. Simmer the mixture over low heat until the seeds start to soften and the mixture starts to thicken, about 10 minutes.
2. Add the honey, sugar, grated lemon rind, margarine, and applejack. Continue to simmer the mixture for another five minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the ground pecans and set the mixture aside to cool. When cool, place the

filling in an air tight container and refrigerate along with the dough.

**Assembling and baking the cookies:**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Remove the dough and the filling from the refrigerator and let both set at room temperature for 30 minutes. To make rolling the dough easier, divide it into two equal-size pieces.
3. On a lightly floured surface, gently roll the first half of the dough to a thickness of approximately 1/8-inch. Using a 3-inch cookie cutter, cut as many circles as you can, about 18.
4. Place one rounded teaspoon of filling in the center of each cookie. Form triangular pyramids with each cookie by folding the edges of the dough up on three sides of the circle. Gently shape the raised edges up over the filling to form a pocket. Pinch the points of the newly formed pyramid to prevent the sides from falling during baking.
5. Place the cookies on a lightly greased baking sheet and bake until lightly browned, about 15 minutes.

## Pickled chili peppers

My mom used pickled chili peppers as a basic flavor enhancing ingredient in countless recipes. In Boston during the '50s and '60s chili peppers were considered ethnic foods and were not as widely available in supermarkets as they are today. To an enterprising opportunist like my mother, this never seemed to pose any problem. She knew a great deal about chili peppers and knew how, when, and where to find the peppers she needed to prepare her assorted chili pepper dishes.

In New England, late August is prime season for home gardeners to harvest their chili pepper crops. Amy and John Wheatly, our Jamaican neighbors, maintained a huge garden, in which they grew three varieties of chili peppers: jalapeno, cherry, and a small blistering hot variety similar to the chiltepin of Mexico and the West Indian datil. Every August, my mother was invited into the Wheatly's garden. She would pick several pounds of collard greens, bring them home, and cook them in her own special way. She would then exchange the whole batch of greens with Mrs. Wheatly for two gallons of freshly picked red chili peppers, mostly jalapeno and hot cherry. Then she would pickle the peppers and use them throughout the year to make her favorite chili pepper dishes.

In the old recipe file she kept I found recipes for several homemade table sauces made with chili peppers. My mom used these to add zip to just about every food she ate. Some of the sauces were aromatic and mild. Others were so fiery hot they were shared only with friends who shared my mom's love of hot and spicy foods. "I'm afraid if I serve this stuff to anyone else, they'd probably end up walking around the room backwards," was her usual comment after

preparing a fresh bottle of her favorite hot sauce. Try the following pickled pepper recipe. But if hot peppers are not to your liking, substitute sweet cherry, pepperoncini, tomato, or any other ripe sweet pepper. The result will be a pickled sweet pepper with much of its natural flavor preserved in a gentle tasting sauce that is unlike most other acidy pickling solutions.

This recipe makes 8 to 12 pints, depending on the size of the peppers and how tightly you pack them. I use a mixture of jalapenos that are about 3-inches long and 1½-inches wide, along with cherry peppers that are about 1-inch long and 1½-inches wide and I don't try to jam the peppers tightly into the jars. For me, this process yields 12 pints. You can count on getting at least eight.

**Ingredients:**

**Brine:**

2 lbs. (1 gallon) fresh, ripe, chili peppers
1 gallon water
2 cups of sea or Kosher salt

**Marinade:**

1 cup water
5 cups white vinegar (5% acidity)
2 Tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. dried thyme
10 whole allspice
1 tsp. whole coriander seeds
12 black peppercorns
12 white peppercorns
1 tsp. whole mustard seeds
2 juniper berries
6 whole cloves

**Herb Oil Garnish:**

4 dried bay leaves
12 whole, unpeeled, garlic cloves (par boiled for 2 minutes)
2 carrots, par boiled for 2 minutes and sliced into 1/8-inch coins
6 peeled shallots
12 Tbsp. virgin olive oil

**Method:**

1. Wash the peppers, trim the stems to a stub and prick each pepper twice with a fork on opposite sides.
2. Bring the water to a boil, immediately remove it from the heat, and dissolve the salt in it to make a brine. Let it cool.
3. Combine the washed peppers and the cooled brine in a glass, plastic, stainless steel, or other non reactive container.

Place a china plate on top of the peppers to hold them down in the brine. Use two if necessary. Soak the peppers in the brine for a minimum of 12 hours.

4. Combine all the marinade ingredients in a heavy bottom stainless steel sauce pan. Bring this mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes

5. Wash and sterilize 8 to 12 pint-size canning jars and lids. In each sanitized, hot jar place  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a dried bay leaf, one garlic clove, several carrot slices,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a shallot and 1 tablespoon of olive oil, then pack the peppers into the jars. Pour marinading liquid into each jar leaving at least  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of head space from the top of the liquid to the rim.

6. Use a boiling water bath method to seal the jars and process the peppers for five minutes. Store the jars in a cool, dark place for three to four weeks before using.

Refrigerate unused portions after you've opened a jar.

## **Nana V's fire sauce**

This is one of the many hot table sauces my mother made using her store of pickled peppers. It's good on greens, eggs, and practically everything else. When I was a kid, at any given time one could find at least three different home-made hot sauces in our refrigerator. The uneducated palate would usually be hard pressed to distinguish one from the other but this sauce was the only exception, simply because it was always labeled as "sauce for greens." In years when the late summer was hot and yielded little or no rain in Boston, chili peppers of all varieties would come off the bush as hot and flavorful as it was possible for each variety to get. Sauce for greens was made exclusively from these peppers, and was seldom offered to anyone outside my mothers small conclave of chili pepper lovers. Of course it is not necessary to use fire breathing chili peppers to assemble this recipe. The mixture of ripe jalapeno and cherry peppers that I suggested in the pickled pepper recipe will almost always give this sauce the right balance of heat and flavor. Unlike my mother, I don't limit the use of this sauce to cooked greens. I use it as an all purpose sauce to add zip to any food, including my over easy eggs at breakfast.

### **Ingredients:**

1 pint homemade pickled chili peppers from the previous recipe
1 12 oz. bottle chili sauce
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pickling marinade strained from the chili peppers
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Lairds Applejack or brandy
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. fresh ground black pepper
$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground coriander
$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. liquid smoke
$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. ground cumin

### **Method:**

1. Strain the peppers saving the pickling liquid, garlic clove, shallot, and carrot slices. Discard the spices.

2. Remove the stems and seeds from each of the peppers, and process the peppers, garlic clove, shallot and carrot slices into a paste, using a food processor or blender.

3. Combine the chili pepper paste, chili sauce, pickling liquid, applejack and Worcestershire sauce in a stainless steel sauce pan. Simmer the mixture over low heat for five minutes. Stir in the black pepper and coriander and simmer for another minute.

4. Remove the sauce from the heat and stir in the liquid smoke and cumin.

5. Let the sauce cool in refrigerator.

You may prefer a thinner sauce, so before bottling, adjust the thickness of the sauce to suit your preference by adding a little more pickling liquid or applejack. Store in the refrigerator in a sanitized pint canning jar or other sanitized container of your choice.

## **Mystery salsa**

I will be honest here and admit that I don't know where my mother got this recipe. I have included it in this collection because she uses a measured amount of her pickled peppers, as a flavor enhancer. For her to limit a measured amount of any enhancer in a recipe meant that she was creating a formula for some special purpose. I can only guess that she found a basic fresh salsa recipe that she liked and customized it to suit her own taste.

I first served this sauce to some close friends at a surprise birthday party for Tricia, my wife. The adults gobbled the first batch so fast that I had to make a second batch for the kids and myself. This sauce is easy to make and can be prepared year round because it uses canned plum tomatoes. Unlike salsas made from fresh tomatoes, it will keep in the refrigerator for a couple of days without losing its zip.

Why canned tomatoes? My mother was a cook who understood that the so called fresh tomatoes sold in New England during the winter were immature fruits that were picked green in some unknown part of the world then shipped to our area, placed in gas chambers, and treated with ethylene gas to turn them red. The science of using this simple hydrocarbon gas to ripen immature fruit has been around since the 4th century B.C. But the result is lower nutrient value, bland taste, and a rubbery texture that is characteristic to all fruits treated in this manner. This unfortunate condition, however, is not a result of the ethylene treatment. Picking the fruit before it has a chance to mature naturally is the problem. Ethylene is produced naturally by fruit bearing plants well in advance of ripening and it initiates the ripening process in an organized and efficient way.

The good news is that most canned tomatoes are allowed to ripen on the plant, as nature intended, and the canning

process does minimal damage to their taste and nutritional value. This makes them a much better choice for cooking during the off season. When fresh tomatoes are in season, simply substitute three cups of peeled, seeded and diced, very ripe fresh tomatoes for the canned tomatoes.

Try this salsa on eggs, hamburgers, hot dogs, or even as a dip for oysters and clams. I think that you will discover, as I have, that salsa can be enjoyed with more than corn chips.

**Ingredients:**

1 28 oz. can name brand whole plum tomatoes (avoid bargain brands)  
½ cup red onions  
⅓ cup red bell pepper, finely diced  
2 or 3 home pickled jalapeno or cherry peppers, finely diced  
2 Tbsp. Lairds Applejack or brandy  
¼ cup fresh cilantro, washed, drained and finely chopped  
½ tsp. malt vinegar  
kosher salt to taste  
fresh lime juice to taste

**Method:**

1. Strain the tomatoes over a bowl and save the juice. Gently remove as many of the seeds from each tomato as possible without mashing the flesh. With a very sharp knife, dice the drained tomatoes into medium chunks.

2. Pour the juice into a heavy bottom, stainless steel sauce pan and simmer over low heat until it is reduced by half. Combine the reduced tomato juice with the diced tomatoes in a stainless steel or glass bowl.

3. Combine the red onion, bell pepper, pickled peppers, applejack, cilantro and malt vinegar. Add this mixture to the tomatoes, and let the salsa mellow at room temperature for a couple of hours.

4. After the mellowing period, taste the salsa and add salt and lime juice to suit your taste. This salsa is best when served the day it is made, but it will hold in the refrigerator for a couple of days with only a slight loss of flavor.

## Raspberry ketchup

My mother was never a great ketchup lover but she frequently made table sauces that she called "flavored ketchup." These sauces were usually prepared during Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, packed into an assortment of fancy bottles, then given to friends and neighbors as gifts. She made these ketchup-like sauces from a variety of fruits combined with fresh or canned tomato sauce and spices. I chose this recipe because it is easy to prepare and my children love it. My in-house food committee, chaired by daughter Sarah with my two sons Jason and Michael holding the other two seats, gave this recipe a

unanimous thumbs up. I have reduced my mother's recipe from a 12-pint yield to about a pint because the larger quantity requires processing. Also, the fruits that are used to make these flavored ketchups are available all year long in fresh or frozen state and the finished sauce lasts for weeks in the refrigerator. My daughter Sarah says, "Tell everyone to try this ketchup with chicken, it's great."

**Ingredients:**

1½ cups fresh or frozen raspberries  
1 to 3 home pickled chili peppers (let your taste be the judge) or substitute ⅛ tsp. of cayenne pepper  
⅓ cup fresh or canned tomato puree  
⅓ cup wine vinegar  
¼ cup medium or dry sherry  
⅔ cup firmly packed light brown sugar  
¼ tsp. ground clove  
¼ tsp. ground ginger  
½ tsp. fresh ground nutmeg  
¼ tsp. kosher salt  
1 Tbsp. butter or margarine

If you are using fresh raspberries, carefully pick them over and use only firm unblemished berries. If you are using the home pickled chili peppers, remove the seeds and the stems.

**Method:**

1. In a stainless steel heavy bottomed sauce pot, combine the raspberries and pickled chili peppers with the tomato puree, wine vinegar, and sherry. If you are substituting cayenne pepper for the peppers, do not add it at this time. Over low heat simmer the mixture for 60 seconds.

2. Over a bowl put the mixture through a food mill or press the mixture through a stainless steel strainer and discard the pulp.

3. Return the strained mixture to the stainless steel sauce pan along with the sugar, ground clove, ground ginger, ground nutmeg, salt, butter, and, if you are substituting it for the pickled peppers, cayenne pepper. Return the pot to the stove and simmer for about 10 minutes over a low heat until the desired consistency is reached. If the sauce appears to be too thick adjust the consistency with a little more vinegar mixed half-and-half with water.

4. Transfer the sauce to a sanitized pint canning jar, and place it in the refrigerator to cool. This sauce is at its best when warmed over low heat to just below the simmering point.

That's it for this issue. I hope you enjoy the recipes and I know my mom would love the idea of sharing all of this good food with so many good people. Δ

## Here's a business that's going to the dogs

By Robert L. Williams

Lynn Allen for ages wanted to move to the country. Growing up in the big city, she always had a love for horses, dogs, and the wide-open spaces. In fact, she spent most of her spare time and too much of her money in an effort to raise horses.

Her father once told her that she would wind up animal-poor, that her life was going to the dogs. He didn't know how right he was. For the past several years Lynn Allen's working life has, indeed, gone to the dogs. She grooms them, six days a week.

That means washing, drying, brushing, combing, ridding the animals of fleas, ticks, and other parasitic skin problems. And Lynn Allen has found that she can not only stay close to animals—she still raises horses but now on a slightly larger scale—but she has the best of all possible worlds.

First, she gets to be close to her children and husband. Like many wives in the United States, she found herself becoming highly frustrated by having to make one of two career choices—both wrong: She could work outside the home and leave the children at a childcare business and pay a huge portion of her salary for child care, or she could stay at home with the kids and deprive the family of needed income.

So when she had the opportunity to start a dog-grooming business she leaped at the chance. But still she faced problems—money problems. There was, first, the question of advertising. Then there was a matter of work space: where would she groom the dogs? In her house there wasn't enough room to spare, and even if there had been, the idea of keeping the

dogs in the house was not attractive. There were other problems as well. She needed equipment and she didn't want to invest a great deal of money on what might turn out to be a doomed business.

After all, she didn't know if people would really want to spend the time and money necessary for good grooming of their dogs. And she didn't know if customers (or clients) would agree

Does the Lynn Allen story echo that of thousands of wives or mates of people who live in the backwoods? It would be staggering to know how many people have faced or are facing the dilemma confronting Lynn.

There was still another problem: Lynn wanted to homeschoo her children, and there was the problem of how working would conflict with teaching time.

Here's what she did, and she's delighted at the way it all turned out.

First, she let some of her dog-owner friends know that she was opening her own business. Earlier she had worked for a highly popular and successful veterinarian in the area and had been able to meet many of the doctor's clients. The vet himself was not into pet grooming: his professional life was already filled with the needs of local animals.

When she started her business, Lynn had a dozen or so of the regular clients. And then a strange—actually a highly predictable thing happened. She did such a good job on the animals that the clients told their friends, who also owned dogs.

And the friends brought their animals. And then told other friends.

"I think often of how my father warned me about becoming animal-poor," Lynn says. "But my business did not go to the dogs. The dogs came to me."

She now works with a partner named Stephanie, and the two have a great symbiotic relationship. If one needs to take some time off, the other is there to pick up the slack. And with two people at work, one can do the washing and brushing and the other can do the clipping and caring for the



*Lynn Allen has discovered that the dog grooming business is very rewarding.*

to drive out to the country to deliver the dogs, and then make a second trip (of several miles, one way) to pick them up.

Then there was the matter of people who could bring the dogs but their schedules would not permit them to pick them up at the end of the day, and Lynn figured that she would be stuck with dogsitting all night.

Does this sound vaguely familiar?

animal's cosmetic appearance, which includes the ears, toenails, and the rest.

"We think our job is concerned with several levels," Allen says. "First of all, we like to educate owners of dogs. We tell them how important it is for their pets to have clean and healthy coats, but we also point out that it is important to care for the dog's nails—perhaps just as important is concern about the animal's disposition and spirit. We like to see dogs that are not only healthy but happy."

She adds, "and we have to realize that many pet owners do not have the time and the equipment to give their dogs the proper grooming we try to provide."

A dog's visit to the grooming shop is much like a human being's trip to the beauty shop. Stephanie and Lynn provide the complete works, and they

use special shampoos to rid the animal of fleas and other undesirable pests.

"Owners want their dogs to smell good, look good, and feel good," Allen says, "and when we have done our job the way the owners want it done, then we in turn feel good."

Allen stresses that she and Stephanie in no way treat the dogs medically. "Take your dog to the vet if he's sick," Allen says.

"Bring him to us if he's dirty."

She stresses the idea of dogs—they do not handle cats or any other animals at their shop which is located between two small towns. A long-time dog lover, Allen once raised Great Danes in addition to working for the vet.

"I loved working at the veterinary hospital," Allen says, "but at the same time I wanted to be able to stay home as much as possible and still have an income. So this has turned out great for us."

At present the grooming service has all the business the two can handle. "We have 50 to 60 dogs each week," Allen says, "and we could have more business if we wanted it. We are now actually turning down clients because we don't have time to take on more



*The haircut is a crucial part of the grooming. It is here that the special characteristics of a breed of dog are enhanced.*

work, not if we are going to do it correctly."

The clients come in all sizes and breeds. One of the largest dogs they groom weighs 132 pounds.

Allen says that she does not recommend that dog owners try to groom their dogs themselves unless they are really familiar with the care and treatment of their animals. "You have to know a dog's anatomy," she points out. "I don't mean just the obvious. You have to give special attention to the dog's skin, feet, and ears. You have to cut the dog's toenails properly so that the dog's feet will stay healthy. And when we groom animals we sometimes discover a variety of problems that the owners don't know about—things like tumors and infected ears."

She adds, "Educating the client is one of the most important jobs we do. As an example, a full treatment—bathing, clipping, drying, and all the rest—can be a traumatic experience for a dog, and we try to make the visit here as pleasant as we possibly can. We try to live up to our goals. We make good dogs look great and great dogs even greater."

So the story started in doubt and ended happily, but what about the middle parts. No less an authority than



*A good scrub-down and soaping with special shampoo cleanses and rids the dog of unwanted scents and guests.*

Aristotle told us that a good story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. So here is the middle.

First, when the clients started coming, Lynn and Stephanie bought a small used trailer—the mobile home type—and had it set up on the property of Allen and her husband David. It took very little time for the business to pay for the trailer.

Even before that, they bought the necessary equipment: bathtubs for the dogs (actually, large sinks so the animals are waist-high to Lynn when she works), had water connections and electrical connections run into the trailer, bought some small heaters for colder weather, purchased clippers, brushes, and the other necessities for the work.

This was done as they were able to afford the items. They had to buy cages for the dogs so that there wouldn't be any fights between the dogs. They equipped the cages so that dogs could stay overnight if necessary, and they could add a boarding fee to the cost of grooming.

This was a master stroke. Now, clients realized, they could plan their vacation and while they were gone their dogs would not only be boarded and cared for but they would be groomed and ready when the owners returned.

But what about the money? It's there, too.

Assume you open your own dog grooming business and can handle 50 to 60 dogs each week, as Lynn and Stephanie do. If you charge \$35 per dog, which is a fairly inexpensive fee, your weekly income will be \$1,750 for 50 dogs and \$2,100 for 60 dogs.

Now, wait. Before you get excited about making \$2,000 per week, there are some necessary expenses. For

instance, suppose the trailer payment is \$200 per month and heat, electricity, and other business-related expenses add up to another \$600 per month. In fact, make your expenses an even \$1000 per month.

The news is still not bad. In one month you take in \$7,000 per month and pay out \$1,000, or even more. That still leaves \$5,000 monthly, at least.

Look at the worst possible scenario. Suppose you can't charge more than \$20 and the best you can do is 10 dogs each week. That adds up to only \$200



*The dogs tend to like both bath and drying, once they realize it's not painful.*

weekly, less expenses. Still, you could do 10 dogs in a very short time, even if you allot two hours per dog. That's less than three days each week. You still have two or three more days in which to pick up extra money.

But you can and should charge more than \$20 for your work. If you go up to \$25 and have 25 dogs weekly, your income, before your expenses, will be \$625 weekly or \$2,500 monthly.

That's \$30,000 per year, and you don't have to leave home or invest heavily into equipment. If you groom only a few dogs each week, you can possibly do the work in your house (in

a spare room or a screened-in porch in warm weather.

You get the point. You can start small and expand as your experience and number of clients will permit.

But how do you get started? The easy way is to work for an experienced groomer for a while, until you know the basic work inside and out. Read books to help fill in the gaps you did not take care of during your work. You can even take courses at some colleges in animal grooming.

And you do not need to limit yourself to dogs. There are many animals that need occasional or regular grooming. Many people do not like to groom cats, but you might find steady customers who will pay to clean their feline friends.

What about horses? What about other household pets? The more you specialize, the more narrow your list of potential clients will become. People have an endless list of pets (or so it seems), from snakes to ferrets to skunks.

This article in no way attempts to tell you how to do the actual work. There's a reason: I have no earthly idea other than the basic wash job for Fido. Learn from the professionals. Find out what types of insurance, if any, you need. I am confident that there are hidden expenses: there always will be.

But after all of the costs of operation, you still will enjoy a nice profit from your work. And, as Lynn Allen learned, some of the benefits are far greater than money. She gets to stay at home each day, if she wishes. She can enjoy working with her own dogs and horses and she has the most family time she has ever had at her disposal.

And that's not bad, for a business that has gone to the dogs. △

## Ayoob on firearms

By Massad Ayoob

### Part 1—Is this the ultimate backwoods home rifle?

**M**y friend Nolan Santy, the master gunsmith, was standing with me on the back porch of the cabin on the lake as we sipped our beverages and talked about guns. Specifically, about the lighter and lighter rifles that aging males such as we prefer for hunting and general “woodswalking.”

“My buddy Eric raves about his Thompson/Center Contender carbines,” said Nolan. “He has a bunch of

them in different calibers. Most of them shoot under an inch at a hundred yards, and he’s got a couple that do half that. You wouldn’t believe how well they shoot.”

“Oddly enough, I would,” I answered.

For a few weeks now I had been playing with a Contender carbine in caliber .223 Remington. The Contender pistol designed by Warren Center decades ago had proven to be amazingly accurate. It almost totally rules the shooting sport known as Hunter Pistol under NRA auspices. The most accurate handgun I own is a Contender customized by J.D. Jones and chambered for his fabulous, proprietary big game hunting cartridge, the .375 JDJ. My friend Glenn Dubois, a better shot than I, once delivered a 1.5-inch group with it at 200 yards. That’s the kind of accuracy one normally gets from a sniper rifle.

Some years ago the Thompson/Center people brought it out as a carbine (short rifle) and while it has sold enough to remain in production since, it hasn’t set the world on fire. Shooters and hunters are a traditional lot, and it takes them a long time to warm up to a firearm that looks different from what they’re used to.

I invited my daughters to come and shoot the single shot carbine with me. Elder brat, a graduate of high tech advanced combat shooting schools like Chapman Academy and Thunder Ranch, responded with an expression I had last seen on my Great Dane as he regarded a passing chihuahua. Younger brat looked at me, looked at her custom Olympic Arms AR-15 semiautomatic, looked at the single shot, and looked back at me. She said,



*Author's T/C .223 works fine with fore-end removed and weighs only four pounds in that format.*



*Massad Ayoob*

with the soft compassion for which teenage girls are so universally noted, “Gettin’ too old for the fast ones, huh?”

OK, so I’m getting old. Old people slow down. However, we also tend to return to the Old Values, of which “one target, one shot” should rank high on the list. After all, if you own a backwoods home, this is your property we’re talking about shooting on, and not just at the part where you’ve set up your own range. Do you really want to be hosing your landscape with high capacity magazines? Besides, the single shot—the single chance to take the quarry before it runs—is held in many circles to be the mark of the quintessential sportsman.

I want an auto rifle with lots of ammo in its magazine for tasks like police work and home defense. For the routine farm chores where a shot needs to be fired, however, the little Contender carbine will do just fine.

The T/C is extremely safe. It has a break-open action that requires a firm pull on the release lever, the spurred lower part of the trigger guard. One safety device is a pivot lever on the hammer that "sets" the firing pin. Another is the fact that the hammer must be thumb-cocked before the gun can fire.

Trigger pull on this specimen was crisp and clean, firing at about four pounds pressure. Though numerous adjustments possible in the trigger as it comes from the factory are one reason it's so beloved by serious shooters, this one did all I needed right out of the box. The front post sight was sharp and clear. The rear sight was a square notch like on a target pistol. The sights had been registered for dead-on point of aim/point of impact before it was shipped, the mark of a company that really cares about quality control and product performance.

Initial testing was done with the iron sights at 25 yards. All rounds tried in the 52 to 55 grain weight range shot well. That's what the barrel was rifled for. A different rifling twist is needed for the currently trendy 68 and 69 grain bullets, and these didn't shoot well in the test carbine at all.

Best performance came with Black Hills' new 52-grain hollowpoint Moly-Coat. Though some experts swear the moly coating merely makes the guns easier to clean (which it does) and opinion is divided on whether or not the coating really improves accuracy, no one can say it's deleterious to accuracy. Even with the iron sights, this rifle would put three of the Black Hills slugs into a group the size of a single .30 caliber bullet hole at 25 yards from the bench rest. My worst group at that distance was 9/16ths of one inch.

Why test a rifle at only 25 yards? First, it's the easiest way to find out

where it shoots initially and how much sight correction it's going to need. But think about it. Those marauding squirrels that have been ripping off your bird feeder: with a head-shot from an accurate rifle, they become not only a solved problem but the key ingredient in a pot of Songbird's Revenge Stew. The fox in the henhouse (the furry one, not the political one). The usually nocturnal

aged eyes and with the rifle braced on a car door. No wonder this gun has a reputation for one-inch accuracy or better at that range with a good scope.

Right now, the iron sights are still in place. I discovered that if I remove the fore-end, the gun weighs only four pounds, but it's just as easy to aim and shoot accurately from the shoulder. The fore-end is there in part to insulate the hand from the rifle barrel when it gets hot. In any application but a day at the range, when will we fire enough rounds in rapid sequence from a single shot rifle to heat up the barrel?

I like this wee .223 just as it is, and I like it even better with the fore-end slipped off. My friend, Walt Carlson, uses a Contender carbine for club rifle matches (steel critter silhouettes up to 100 yards with a rimfire rifle). In handgun or carbine configuration, Contenders take barrels in a wide variety of calibers, and the safety switch on the hammer is also convertible between centerfire and rimfire. Walt's is in .22 Long Rifle with the heavy "Super 16-inch barrel, a beautiful laminated thumb-hole stock, and a Tasco 6 to 12 power telescopic sight. He's delighted with it.

However, that rifle weighs seven pounds. I like the slimness and lightness of the test gun the way it is. Still, the gun is so inherently accurate it calls out for a telescopic sight, especially a quickly removable one that will return to sight zero when replaced. I need to try that.

Stay tuned for Part II of our assessment of what might just be the handiest little rifle to have in a backwoods home.

(Mas Ayoob's classes in armed self defense are taught nationwide. For information contact Lethal Force Institute, PO Box 122, Concord, NH 03302, or check the LFI website at [www.ayoob.com](http://www.ayoob.com).)  $\Delta$



*Walt Carlson's heavy barrel T/C .22 weighs seven pounds with Tasco 6-24X telescopic sight and exotic stock.*

raccoon that staggers into your yard in broad daylight during a rabies epidemic. Are any of these likely to be farther than 25 yards away when you take the shot?

At a hundred yards, groups opened up. 68-grain match ammo was like throwing rocks, but again the Black Hills 52-grain hollowpoint came up aces. Groups ran one and five-sixteenths of an inch at best to a little over three inches. But bear in mind, this was with iron sights guided by middle

# Think of it this way...

By John Silveira

## What's left, what's right? What's liberal, what's conservative?

The issue was all but done and Dave, the fellow who publishes this magazine, was at his computer working on his editorial. It's always the last thing that goes in. I, on the other hand, who had finished all my tasks, sat near the window playing one game of solitaire after another on my computer.

Meanwhile, Mac—that's O.E. MacDougal, our poker playing friend from Ventura, California—was up visiting. The lake is supposed to be real good for fishing this spring and he'd made the 700-mile trip to see if it was true. So far, he hadn't been disappointed. At the moment he was sitting across the room next to the fax machine reading a book on differential equations. I didn't ask him why.

"Why left and right?" Dave suddenly asked.

I paused and turned toward him. "What d'you say?" All I could see was the back of his head. I didn't know if he was talking to me or what.

"We use those terms, but I don't know why," he said. He turned around and saw I was looking at him. "Do you know where they come from?"

"Left and right?" I thought. "Ahh..."

"You don't, do you."

I shook my head. "I don't even know what you're talking about."

"Mac?" he asked.

MacDougal raised his left hand—a signal for Dave to wait until he finished writing some figures on the paper. Finally, he put his hand down and stared a moment at what he had written. Then he checked a page at the back of the book. I supposed it was the answer key. Finally, he looked up.

"Did you hear the question?" Dave asked.

"Left and right?"

"Yeah."

"Do you mean left and right in the brain, accounting, politics, physics...?"

"Politics," Dave said.

"It comes from the way the representatives seated themselves in the parliament of post-revolutionary France."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what the French Revolution was, right?"

"Yeah, it happened right around the time of our own Revolution—but a little bit later."

"That's right. Ours started in 1776 and went on until 1783. The French Revolution started in 1789 and ended, depending on which historian you read, about a decade later. After their revolution, those in the French parliament who demanded greater popular sovereignty and democratic control over political, social, and economic life sat to the left of the presiding officer's chair while the others, mostly those who advocated holding onto the wisdom embodied in traditional culture and institutions, sat to the right."

"You're saying the revolutionaries sat to the left and those who wanted to keep the old ways sat to the right," Dave said.

Mac nodded.

"That's it? That's where the terms came from?"

"That's right. And they've become political terms in just about every culture on the planet since then. In the meantime, of course, there have been certain ironies in the way the meanings of the words have changed. But it all started in the French parliament."

Dave nodded and said, "Thanks," then went back to work on his editori-



John Silveira

al and Mac started working the next problem in his book while I went back to playing computers games.

A few minutes later, Dave turned around again. "What ironies?"

It's funny because I was wondering the same thing though I hadn't bothered to ask. But I stopped playing my game and Dave and I both turned to Mac who was checking the back of his book again.

He stopped and looked at us again. "What was that?"

"What ironies?" Dave repeated.

Mac glanced up at the ceiling for a moment as if considering the question.

Dave started to say, "You had said..."

"Oh, you mean the ironies about the way left and right are used."

Dave nodded.

### The original left

"Just think about those who were originally on the left. They were the ones who wanted the old political system changed and they also wanted

more say by the people in society's processes.

"On the other hand, those who were on the right were those who wanted to keep the old institutions in place because they felt there was a lot of wisdom and stability in those time tested ideas. They also didn't trust democratic input."

"So, where's the irony?" Dave asked.

"Can't you see it?"

Dave shook his head and Mac looked to me expectantly but I just sat there.

"Think about those who are on the left today."

"I guess you'd say that those are the liberals."

"Okay, we'll call them liberals. In this country, these liberals have changed society. But at the same time they've institutionalized their beliefs."

"What do you mean?"

"Every program these modern-day leftists have gotten enacted is now carried out by bureaucracies and they insist the solutions to nearly all of society's problems lie in government and bureaucratic controls." He hesitated.

"And?" Dave asked.

"Nothing can be further removed from democratic input than a bureaucracy. Not even dictators are further removed from the people than bureaucrats and nothing is more enduring. Dictators are overthrown; dictators die. But bureaucracies seem to be immortal."

"It's ironic that these leftists who advocated democratic control have placed their policies so far beyond democratic control. And they did this intentionally."

"In the meantime, to ensure that their 'democratic' policies are followed, they define those who would live differently as lawbreakers."

"What do you mean, lawbreakers?" I asked.

"What if you don't want to participate in many of the liberal programs. Say you don't want to participate in

Social Security, or you don't want to wear seat belts or motorcycle helmets, or you want to use your private property in your own way—and risk the wrath of the Environmental Protection Agency? There's a whole list of programs instituted by these so-called liberals and, when they have put them in place, they've made it illegal for you not to follow their agenda. If you try to live your life counter to their programs you can find yourself paying fines—even doing time—for crimes that are really little more than political crimes.

"Worse yet, they won't give up on programs that are obviously failing. They won't even give up those that are even harmful to society."

"Like what?" Dave asked.

"One of the greatest social failures in history is our welfare system. It's resulted in the destruction of the black segment of American society. Welfare as we know it has been a failure for at least three decades. But it continues because those who call themselves leftists refuse to admit it's failed and will not try new solutions—particularly if the proposed solutions run counter to their philosophical beliefs or, even worse, the solutions might erode their political power base. Today's leftists, those who instituted and maintain these programs, now perfectly fit the definition of those on the right after the French Revolution."

"You mean, they are now the people who advocate holding onto the so-called wisdom and traditions of the past," Dave said.

"That's right. We've made most blacks and a large percentage of those on welfare a permanent underclass that has become self perpetuating. Surely this was not intended by the people who started these programs. But, in spite of this, the only solutions the promoters of these programs can come up with have been to add more money and more bureaucracy, which removes it even further from public control. The fact that all the money spent so far and all the bureaucratic

control seems to have made the problems worse is ignored as less important than maintaining the program.

"Is that the only example you can give?" I asked.

"Social Security is failing and it's inefficient. There are other ways to ensure retirement and there's already a successful working model of privatized retirement in Chile, and no one down there is talking about when the system goes broke—because it won't. But almost no one is willing to talk about getting rid of the system we have in this country, and while Social Security slowly crumbles, no one is allowed to leave it, to stop participating in it, or to use the money taken from them to get into a program that works."

"Are you trying to say those who claim to be on the left are no longer democratic," Dave said.

"They're not. In fact they oppose many other programs that offer society powerful democratic alternatives."

"Like what?"

"If they, the left, wanted more everyday democracy they would be FIJA advocates; they would back school voucher programs; and they would endorse laissez-faire economics which is the ultimate in freedom and democracy."

## Fully informed jury

"FIJA?" I asked.

"The Fully Informed Jury Association."

"How would FIJA contribute to making a more democratic society?" Dave asked.

"What that organization wants is a constitutional amendment that says a judge is obligated to inform jurors that they don't have to bring a verdict of guilt in a criminal trial if they feel the law is a bad law—even if it's clear the defendant actually broke the law he's on trial for."

"When would you not bring a guilty verdict?" Dave asked.

"Let's say a cancer patient is undergoing chemotherapy and the only thing that keeps her from feeling suicidally sick and continuously vomiting is smoking marijuana. So she smokes some, finds it make the chemotherapy bearable, but one day she gets caught. They bring her to trial. She admits to breaking the law, but explains why she had to. You're on the jury and the closing arguments have been rendered. What's your verdict?"

Dave looked at the floor then back at Mac. "She's in violation of the law, but without the pot she can't keep anything down."

"She may even give up the chemotherapy."

"In that case I'd say not guilty," Dave said.

"But she broke the law."

"But in her case the law is wrong so I'd hold out for acquittal."

"Well, that's the kind of power FIJA wants to put into the hands of the people. They want it as an amendment to the Constitution, and to put teeth into it they want included in the wording that in the instructions a judge gives to jurors, he must inform them that they can nullify the law in any case where they feel the law is being wrongfully applied or just plain wrong. It would also say that if those instructions are not given, the defendant has grounds for a mistrial if found guilty."

"With that kind of power, jurors could make bad laws go away. It's how the government finally gave up on Prohibition in the 1920s and 30s—because juries stopped bringing guilty verdicts, even when it was clear the defendants broke the law, because Americans overall felt the Volstead Act, the federal law that enforced Prohibition, was wrong. Because jurors voted their consciences, the government found it impossible to get convictions anymore, and Prohibition was finally repealed."

"And the left opposes this jury nullification you talk about?"

"The left and most of whoever is supposed to be on the right oppose it. But the left claims to be more democratic and what could be more democratic than the people having the ability to repeal bad laws in the courtroom and not having to wait years, or even generations, while the legislators try to make up their minds what to do about bad laws while under the pressure of special interest groups. Thousands of lives are ruined every year by juries that bring verdicts of guilt that don't want to, but don't know they don't have to."

*If you try to live your life counter to their programs you can find yourself paying fines—even doing time—for crimes that are really little more than political crimes.*

"But we've run a couple of articles on jury nullification in the magazine," I said, "and actually jurors already have the power to do what you're saying. Why would we need a constitutional amendment for it?"

"Because most people today don't know it. And the question is, why doesn't the left want them to know?"

"Do so-called right wing interests advocate jury rights?" Dave asked.

"Some do. A lot don't. As soon as they realize marijuana smokers and people who engage in consensual sex could go free, many on what we call the right oppose jurors' rights."

### School vouchers

"What about school vouchers?" Dave asked. "How are they more democratic?"

"Nationwide, the public educational system is in trouble. The solution offered by special interest groups that back public education is that we need more money and standardized testing. But why not let people take the money that is spent on their child's education and let them take the kids somewhere

else where they feel they may be better educated? What could be more democratic than letting people decide for themselves how and where their children will be educated?

"Why doesn't the left want this?" I asked.

"Because the National Education Association is one of the three or four largest and most powerful special interest groups in this country and the left is afraid of losing their support. Public school teachers are afraid of losing their jobs. So, parents are not allowed to determine how the educational dollars are spent on their children.

### Free market democracy

"And what was the third thing you said?"

"Laissez faire economics—a free market economy," Mac said. "This may be the most important opportunity for democratic action because in a free economy every action you take, whether it's as a supplier or the consumer, you are making a free vote. The marketplace is the ultimate democracy because it takes place everyday. In a free marketplace—free from government and bureaucratic control—you can have something even if the majority doesn't. It's really the ultimate freedom."

"Think of it this way: When a presidential candidate is elected with 53% of the vote, those 53% get what they voted for, but the other 47% are stuck with it too. On the other hand, in a free market, if 53% of the people want American cars and 47% want imports, everyone gets what they want 100% of the time. This happens everyday as long as there's someone willing to be a supplier. Even if only one person in a hundred wants something, he can have it if someone is willing to supply it. A free market is the most basic democracy we have and it happens everyday."

"So, to sum it up, you're saying today's left isn't like the left in the

post-revolutionary French parliament,” Dave said. “It’s like the right.”

### New left — new right

“In the topsy-turvy world of politics, those who claim to be on the left today would actually feel more comfortable sitting on the right in the post-revolutionary parliament and, ironically, many of those who are called right wingers today would find themselves sitting on the left.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “Which right wingers would be on the left?”

“Today’s militia groups would sit on the left side of the old French parliament.”

“I don’t get it,” I said.

There was a long pause while Dave thought. “You mean because they advocate smaller government and more democratic input,” he finally said.

“That’s exactly right. Today’s militia groups are advocating much of what the post-revolutionary radicals in France—those who sat on the left—advocated.”

“I think I see your logic,” Dave said. “But why don’t I hear anyone else saying this?”

“Most people, including most commentators, have no sense of history.”

“You can’t be saying everyone in the press is missing this,” I said.

“I can’t? Several months ago we sat in this office and talked about how the communists in Russia and the old Soviet Union had been called leftists from the late 19th century until the dissolution of the Soviet Union just a few years ago. They were called leftists despite the fact that the Soviet Union was more than a little undemocratic; in fact it was a dictatorship. But not long after the fall of the Soviet Union, when the old-guard communists opposed instituting democratic elections and capitalistic practices—and remember, capitalism is one of the very things the leftists in this country have opposed for decades, and it was

also opposed by the Soviet communists all along—these same communists were suddenly portrayed as right wingers by the media.”

“I remember we talked about it,” I said. “And I remember it on the news.”

“Then the question,” Dave said, “is how could they be left wingers one day and right wingers the next?”

“And the answer,” Mac responded, “is that those who call themselves leftists in the West didn’t like them anymore.”

“Then who is it that actually decides who’s on the left and who’s on the right?” Dave asked.

“Western intellectuals do. On the left are those they like, along with themselves, while on the right is anyone who opposes them—even if those they place on the right have very little in common with each other.”

“So that’s how the Russian communists got put on the right a few years ago,” I said.

“And that’s how Hitler and Mussolini got kicked off the left,” Mac said. “Don’t look surprised,” he added when I did what must have appeared to be a double take. “We’ve talked about this too.”

“Yeah, we did,” Dave said.

“The fascists were espousers of National Socialism. Mussolini, himself, was once the darling of the left—until World War II. Then he got thrown onto the right. You see, fascist economics is little different from what the Democratic Party has been for almost 70 years and what the Republicans have been becoming since 1950.

“The managed competition the Clinton’s and other Democrats have talked about when explaining how they would guide the economy is actually the cornerstone of fascist economics.”

“So the meaning of what it is to be on the left has changed over time,” Dave said.

“I think it’s pretty obvious that it has, and sometimes it changes from day to day.”

“So what we’ve got right now is that left and right aren’t necessarily good terms if you want to understand politics, especially in the historical sense,” Dave said.

### Liberals vs. conservatives

“Are ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ better terms to use?” I asked.



Mac glanced up at the ceiling as if trying to find what to say. "In the 1800s, those who advocated free markets, free trade, capitalism, etc., were called..." He hesitated.

"Conservatives," I said before Dave could.

"No," Mac said, and I wished Dave had beaten me to it.

"Back then," Mac continued, "they were called liberals. If you were a liberal in the last century, it meant you believed there should be limits on government—its authority and its size—and you believed in free markets. Today, people who believe these things are called conservatives. But if you think about it, today they are in fact the liberals again in the sense the term was used in post-revolutionary France, and the real conservatives, now, are nearly all the Democrats and the majority of Republicans."

"You've got my head spinning," I said. "I can't keep up with how the definitions keep switching."

"That's because you're dyslexic," Dave said, then turned back to Mac. "What you're saying is that those on the left are those who say they're on the left, and everyone else is on the right."

"That's pretty accurate. And because those who are on the left call the shots, they've told conservative Christians and free market businessmen that they're on the right along with survivalists and a host of other groups when these groups have little more in common than that they oppose the 'left.'"

## Government by experts

"If you had to sum up what makes a modern leftist today, what would your words be?" Dave asked.

"I can answer that right away. There are two extremes of politics. At one end are those who believe that experts should run the world; at the other are those who think every man is his or her own expert."

"The left, for all it professes about democracy, believes the world should be run by experts."

"Many religious groups feel that way," Dave said.

"And because of that, I'd lump many of them with the leftists. On the other side I'd put those who feel every man and woman is entitled to run his or her own life, whether they take risks with their lives or not."

"Is your editorial about 'left and right,'" Mac asked.

Dave thought a second. "No, I was just wondering where the terms came from."

Mac nodded and went back to his math book while Dave went back to his editorial and I to my games.

It was quiet for awhile until, again, Dave said, "Left, right..."

Déjà vu, I thought. I turned to look at him again.

He turned around, too. "Hey, Mac, you're saying the terms left and right are shifted to suit political ends?"

"Yes."

"Well, given left and right, is there anyone who's ambidextrous?"

I laughed and Dave seemed delighted with his little joke.

But Mac didn't. He thought a second, then said, "Yes."

Dave eyed him suspiciously as if expecting a punch line. I myself expected something funny.

Instead, Mac said, "The Libertarians."

"What do you mean?" Dave asked.

"The Libertarians are a mixture of democratic ideals they want to carry into the future both in politics and economics, but they also have a wish to retain the wisdom of the past—a past to which the Democrats and Republicans pay lip service but ignore in practice. Libertarians are often considered right wingers by the left and left wingers by many so-called conservative groups. And you'll find more and more people becoming Libertarians."

"Conservative gays—and they do exist—find themselves in the

Libertarian Party because homosexuality is considered a personal issue by Libertarians and not an issue in which the government has business."

"What 'past wisdom' are you talking about?" I asked.

"The Constitution. If Libertarians had their way, we'd start all over again with the Constitution as it was written, and they'd drop all but a few of the Amendments that came after the 15th Amendment. In other words, they'd keep things like the 19th Amendment, which guarantees suffrage, and they'd probably keep the 22nd, which limits the terms of the presidency."

He was getting up as he spoke. He put his math book into his tackle box and picked up his fishing rod as he started toward the door.

"And they don't believe experts should run anyone's life."

"Where are you going?" Dave asked.

"Out to the boat."

"Are you going to go fishing this early?"

"No. I'm going to go to the boat because there I can work these math problems in peace," he said as the door closed behind him.

Dave and I sat there staring at the closed door.

"Touchy, isn't he?" Dave said.

I nodded and Dave went back to his editorial.

A few minutes later Dave asked, "Why do you think the terms liberal and conservative switched meanings?"

I turned around and he was looking at me.

I didn't say anything.

"You don't know, do you."

I didn't say anything.

"Where are you going," Dave asked.

I was heading for the door and picked up my rod as I passed it. "You talk too much," I said. "I'm going fishing."

"You're going down to the boat to ask him why, aren't you?" I heard him shout as I closed the door behind me. Δ

## Used bookstores can be successful in the hinterlands

By Jennifer Stein Barker

If you stand reading at the rack closest to the window, you can look up from your book to see the Strawberry Wilderness looming its wooded heights into the blue sky above the town. The woman from Denver is browsing the shelves. She stares at the drama section for a long time, and finally bursts out "I can't believe you have Waiting for Godot in John Day, Oregon!"

A local man with a reputation for fixing anything spots an incomplete set of The Thomas Register, a compendium of who makes what. It contains sources for everything from church pews to electronic equipment, with product listings and descriptions. The man just sits and shakes his head in disbelief that such a wonderful thing exists.

David Judson had bought the set to keep in the shop as a reference, but it goes out the door with the handyman, who uses it to find obscure parts and fix even more things around town than before. The Judsons now plan to buy a brand new set for the shop. It will not be for sale. They'll give it a special shelf near a sitting area where customers can browse through it at leisure. The next nearest public set is in the Ontario library.

Welcome to the Uffda-shop, which has more used and antiquarian books than the population of this remote county of 8,000 people. Apparently, good used bookstores may be found wherever lovers of old books live.

Kathy Judson started the book business when she and her husband David moved from Ontario, Oregon. David had an established career building and repairing computers. They had been commuting to John Day to fill the need here for some years, and wanted

to live in the smaller community. David thought the move would involve some volume tradeoffs, but was pleased to find out that his excellent work generated more business than he thought possible in this remote area.

Kathy had never lived beyond easy commuting distance from a good used bookstore, and she says "I couldn't stand it." The book section grew from a shelf in the corner to take over 2/3 of their present space in a prime retail spot in this small town.

People often come in to the store looking for books to replace copies loaned (and not returned) or lost. They sometimes find things they've been seeking for years. "It's really fun when they've been looking for something, and they find it, and it's out of print and here it is!" Of course, used books are a moving target, and what's in the collection is in constant revision as books are brought in and sold. Kathy tries to keep the collection as eclectic as possible.

The Judsons have an innovative way of buying used books. Cash can be pretty scarce in a small town, especially during off-season for logging and tourists. They use "Uffda Bucks," store money which looks like pretty play money. Local book traders can use them like cash at the store. Inventory cost is not accounted until the "Uffda Buck" is spent at the till (and of course, if they get lost, the inventory was free).

Kathy only pays cash for used books in special circumstances, such as buying fine collector's books or a customer moving away. A lot of the books brought into the store

come from Bend, Boise, Powell's in Portland. "Local readers are very well-traveled. They do some of my book-buying for me."

Kathy says that if you look at the demographics of the John Day area, you wouldn't expect the range of reading tastes. She sells a lot of classics, new books that have been recently reviewed in The Oregonian, and a wide range of other types of literature. The extreme variety of reading tastes in town doesn't fit the image generated by the bucolic surroundings. "Anyone who thinks they know what loggers and ranchers will read is going to be really surprised!"

The store feels different from the stereotypical dusty, claustrophobic used bookstore. "We broke a lot of the rules," Kathy says. The books have all been cleaned with "409" glass cleaner, and old labels removed with lighter fluid. The aisles are roomy and airy, the stacks merely head-height, the shelves spaced to see through between the books. Kathy hated the green shag carpeting when she first saw it, but she admits it has a grassy, bright appearance and makes a friendly surface for children (and their grandparents) to sprawl on.



*A main-street location makes the shop highly visible.*

## A Backwoods Home Anthology



Louisa Gray, age 4, checks out the children's books at Uffda-Shop.

The children's section has even lower shelves, so little hands can reach the books. The children's books are unorganized, because they always end up that way anyway, and the kids don't seem to care. There are selected new books among them, since good children's literature is always coming out, and young people don't always leave their books in buyable shape. Kathy is careful about the condition of what she buys.

There is a jar of penny candy on the counter. A visitor from Vermont says "Oh, Tootsie Rolls, my favorite!" throws in a dime, stuffs his pocket, and munches as he peruses the books. He sits at the table by the window while he checks one out more closely. He leaves with a songbook which contains the lyrics he's been looking for to a cowboy song.

One of the specialties of the shop is the regional section. It contains mostly nonfiction about the inland west. Many of the books in this section are brought in new because they are difficult to find on the used market. Kathy has a good section of older Westerns, depending on what's available in good shape, and what people are asking for. The shop is developing a specialty in old hunting and fishing books.

General recreational fiction is the largest single section. "You never know what people are going to buy. About the time you're ready to give up on (an author or subject), someone will come in and buy every single one of them. I just try to keep a good selection." While I was there, a woman bought a pile of Sandra Brown books, and Kathy said, "That's the second time I've been cleaned out of hers in a month."

Though there aren't very many local authors, Kathy keeps their books in stock. She also buys from small presses like Caxton (which specializes in western nonfiction), as well as from a new-book wholesaler on computer.

Used and new books are entirely different business strategies, but more and more stores are combining them. At the time they started the Uffda shop, there was a new bookstore in John Day, so Kathy planned to stick with the used books. With her innovative way of purchasing used books, they were a much safer business strategy.

When the other bookstore's owner retired last year and closed her shop, Kathy began filling the demand for special orders, for which she gives a 10% discount if prepaid (she finds people pick up their books a lot faster!). She has gradually added a few up-to-date technical manuals and other new books to the shelves that she feels will round out the collection, and reports happily that most of them have sold.

For special order used books, Kathy has access through the Internet to antiquarian booksellers around the world, and she and David check with book-

sellers from Bend to Boise on their personal bookbuying trips. "We do used-book searches for people from out of the area, and mail them the books when they come in."

The store has a friendly feel. David's walking sticks, which are also for sale, loiter in the corners. "Have you ever read a book that you didn't see the word walking-stick or cane in?" David demands. "There's a great deal of walking-stick lore." They have sticks, some functional and some strictly decorative, made from an eclectic variety of materials. There are sagebrush, juniper, pine, birch, rosewood, and cedar ones. There is one made of what Kathy delicately calls "the reproductive organ of a bull." There are some made of Rocky Mountain Blue Spruce with a warm curve that fits the hand and has been polished almost to a glass-like smoothness.

They buy walking-sticks from all over the country, from manufacturers



Kathy Judson assists customers in the bright and airy bookstore.

and individual artisans. One burled pine stick has an owl's head carved at the top and western designs down the shaft to the bottom. Its maker, Seneca artisan Monte Sanford, carved it while he was dying of cancer. There will be no more like it.

Visitors are always curious about the store's name. David is part-Norwegian, and when he and Kathy were considering a list of potential names for the store, none of them

# TWO GREAT DEALS!

seemed to work. "Uff-da!" David exclaimed in frustration, and that was it. The name brings lots of amused comments, and many part-Norwegian visitors. Kathy hands out a card with some of the many interpretations of "Uffda" on the back.

When you have looked your fill at Kathy's shop, and bought your books, she will send you on your way with cheery directions to the next good bookstore down your road. She will tell you which other stores in town might have what you are looking for, if she did not, and where next to head off through the mountains on your quest for superb scenery and great reading.

There are several good lessons to learn from the way Kathy and David do business at their bookstore. You should have as diverse a business as possible. David works his service business out of the store's back room, which pays some of the rent. The walking sticks, penny candy, local newspaper sales, all help to bring people in the door. There is a sale table outside with marked-down books.

The big draw is the quality and variety of the book selection, made possible by Kathy's innovative "Uffda Buck" plan whereby purchases are not accounted (or paid for) until sales are made. The visible location helps make sure that some of the old stock goes out of town with tourists. With new stock coming in as residents make shopping trips to the outside world, this assures that the same books are not just making a round-trip within the community. Kathy is a selective book-buyer.

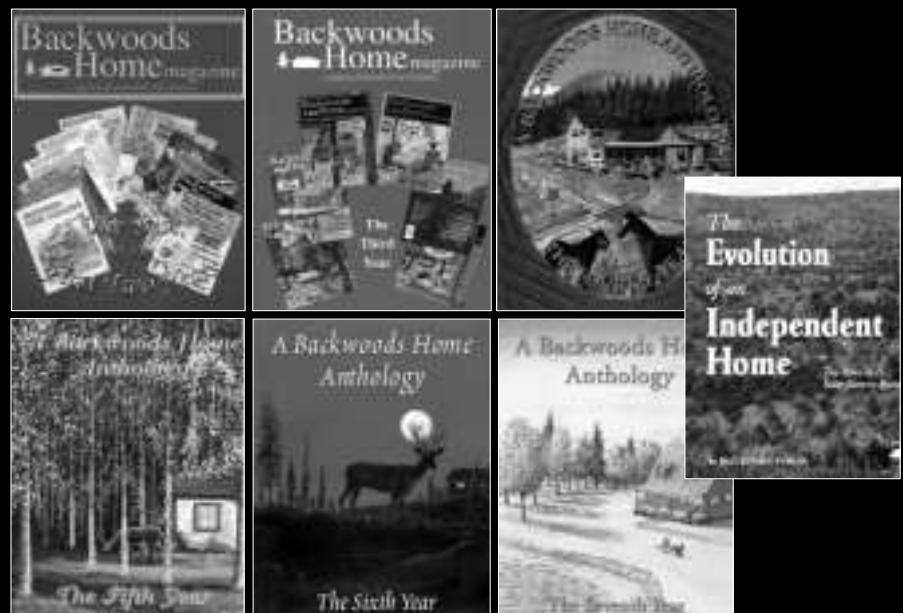
Kathy is willing to talk to lovers of old books who want to open a business. She says she received a lot of help from existing bookstores, including reduced prices for start-up stock. You may visit her at: Uffda-shop Books and Sticks, 201 W. Main St., John Day, OR 97845. Or e-mail the Judsons at: djud@eoni.com for Godot in John Day, Oregon! Δ

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## Grow and use hot peppers this year

By Jackie Clay

**H**ot peppers have been around for centuries but it has just been in the last few years that North Americans are really taking notice. It is a prominent ingredient of South American, Mexican, and Asian meals. Few Americans ever used anything more than a dash of cayenne powder or mild chili powder in their home cooking. But glory be, nowadays folks are discovering the huge variety and exquisite tastes of hot peppers.

"Hot" covers quite a range, from mildly spicy and mellow to the so-called "gringo killers" which will actually blister the mouth and lips of the uninitiated. Luckily, there is a scale of hotness, called the Scoville scale, that measures the hotness of the many varieties of peppers. At the top (the break-glass-in-case-of-fire peppers) are the Red Habañero, the Chiltipine, and Yellow Habañero. These have complex flavors but they are hidden under a veil of fire to those not used to eating volcanoes. If you are new to hot peppers, it is best to work your way up from the bottom of the Scoville scale starting with milder cousins with nicer mellow chile flavor, such as the Big Jim, Anaheims, and Relleno.

Some of the varieties we grow in our garden—and even grew when we lived in northern Minnesota—are the Big Jim, a very large, quite mild, but spicy chile nearly a foot long and about two inches wide; the versatile

Jalepeño which is hot or its milder cousins Tam and Señorita which have the flavor but not the heat; Del Arbor, a thin hot chile about three inches long and less than an inch wide; and the Pasilla Chile, which has a mild, complex flavor—until you add the fiery seeds.

These peppers and other varieties can be used in hundreds of ways. Pickle them; roast them in your oven or on your grill; peel and stuff them for chile rellenos; mix them with meat



A variety of chilies, fresh, dried, and canned.

dishes, casseroles, or rice; dry them, grind them, and use the little rascals in the tastiest chili and other dishes; make sauces with them, such as the famous mole sauces from Mexico; or use them in a zingy salad. The uses are endless and the varieties are, too. Each pepper has a different taste and texture. They are no longer just "hot peppers."

And, easy to raise? You bet. As I've said, we grew them in northern Minnesota. Most seed packages say "start seed indoors, in flats six to eight weeks before setting them out in the garden after the last frosts." Naw.

You'll find you have much better luck starting them 10 to 12 weeks ahead of planting time. The plants will develop a woody stem, heavy root systems, and be ready to produce like crazy. Do not plant them so early that they are blooming when you set them out as they may suffer a setback at transplanting time.

Peppers like heat. That's why they were first cultivated in Mexico and South America and later in Asia. In cold climates, you'll have much better luck using black plastic mulch, walls-o'-water, and row covers in the spring. When pepper plants get chilled, they often do not go on to produce prolifically later in the season.

Although folks think of them as a dry-climate plant, peppers perform better if they receive adequate moisture. A drip system works excellently as does the traditional southwestern system of small irrigation ditches between raised rows.

Pepper plants bear heavily and you can begin using the peppers in the unriper green stage. We use only open pollinated varieties so we can save our own seeds. If you plan on doing this, remember that peppers cross easily so you will have to isolate and cover the individual future seed plants with Reemay or fine screening to prevent cross pollination.

The seed plants should be left alone and allowed to quickly mature. But the others can be picked green, or later as they turn color from yellow to red and even the black in the case of the Pasilla and Negro. For it is upon maturity that the pepper shines with



*The author's kitchen done in a chile motif.*

all of its true complex and often fruity flavor. They are so good we munch them while working in the garden.

Pepper pests are few but do not let a smoker handle your plants. Not only is smoking bad for people, but the smoker can pass on problems that will kill your plants just by the tobacco/smoke on his or her hands.

If you decide to save your own seeds from non-hybrid hot peppers, let them mature to their full color. If frost or rainy weather threatens, bring the pods indoors and let them dry in a warm place. Do not put them in a heated dehydrator as this may "cook" the seeds making them useless for planting. I know of several folks who have done this, much to their dismay.

#### **Some sources of pepper seeds**

Native Seeds/Search  
250 N. Campbell Ave. #325  
Tucson, AZ 85719

Abundant Life Seed Foundation  
P.O. Box 772  
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Seeds of Change  
P.O. Box 15700  
Santa Fe, NM 87506-5700

Totally Tomatoes  
P.O. Box 1626  
Augusta, GA 30903

The hot pepper craze is not a fad but a new discovery and, as in the past few years, you will see more and more varieties available to gardeners. Like us, I'm sure you'll want to try a few new ones each growing season. And remember, peppers are naturally perennials, so you can carefully dig your favorites in the fall, pot them in a large pot, and bring them indoors where they will produce and produce and produce till you set them out again next year.

I totally love chilies because of their superb, often complex and varying flavors, their brilliant, vibrant colors, the wonderful aromas, the beauty and then ease of growing them in the garden, greenhouse or even in a sunny window indoors. In fact, I love my peppers so much that I've incorporated them into my kitchen decor. When remodeling my tiny, cupboard-less kitchen, I not only hung ristas (strings of dried peppers) from the ceilings and walls, I also used carved wooden chilies for door handles and used chile in my kitchen towels, all with a green chile background color. Everyone comments on the effect: sort of a chili-Christmas year-round. Best of all, it didn't cost much at all using only paint, very cheap and cast-off cupboards, plus a little imagination. Δ

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# Cooking with hot peppers

By Jackie Clay

Many recipes that call for hot chilies demand roasted chilies and, unless you happen to live in the Southwest or are of Hispanic or Southwest Native American heritage, you probably don't have the foggiest idea of how to "roast" a pepper. I know I didn't. I roast chilies on a simple grill fueled by charcoal or, better yet, pinon or juniper wood. Mesquite is great, too. I lay washed, clean peppers on a grill, a few inches above hot coals and stand by until they start to char slightly on one side. With a long-handled fork or a clean stick I roll the peppers over to roast the other side. Stand back as they will sometimes pop scattering hot seeds everywhere. My six-year old, David, loves to watch the peppers pop. It's sort of like popcorn, only better.

As the chilies are roasted, drop them into a clean bucket or mixing bowl filled with cold water. Many folks simply place the cold chilies in Zip-Lock bags and freeze them and peel later as they are used. Because I can my peppers, I peel them immediately, de-seed and de-vein them, then plop them into jars with a bit of salt to process in the pressure canner. It's a good idea to wear plastic or rubber gloves as when you handle hot peppers because your hands may burn, especially under your fingernails where you are very tender. And this chile oil, containing capsicum, does not wash off and rubbing your eyes or even flossing your teeth later that night, may provide unpleasant surprises.

Peppers may also be roasted in an oven at 450° F by placing them near the heat source until they blister and are partially charred, then popped into ice water or put into a paper bag for steaming and cooling.



*Carved wooden chiles, painted red are door handles on a green chile background, ristas of dry chiles, and even chiles are on my dish towels!*

## Chilies Rellenos

This is a great stuffed chile dish. The name is pronounced "chilies re-YEN-os" for you folks who don't want to sound uneducated in a Mexican eatery.

8 large Big Jim, Poblano, or Relleno chilies, green and roasted  
1 16-oz. can tomatoes  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
1 tsp. beef bouillon granules  
Dash of comino  
Dash of cinnamon  
4 cups shredded cheddar cheese or Monterey jack  
8 egg yolks  
2 Tbsp. water  
1/4 cup flour  
1/2 tsp salt  
8 egg whites  
Shortening for frying

Make tomato sauce from undrained tomatoes, onions, bouillon, comino, and cinnamon, heat thoroughly, then simmer while fixing peppers.

Remove the seeds and veins from the peppers, slitting each carefully on one side only, then stuff each with 1/2 cup of cheese. Set these aside on a plate.

Slightly beat the egg yolks and water. Add the flour and salt and beat until thick. (If you use the same whip or blades you used to beat the yolks, make sure you first clean them thoroughly because the whites will not get stiff if there is any yolk on them.) Fold whites into yolks.

In large cast iron skillets heat 1/2-inch of shortening until hot, but not smoking. For each serving, spoon about 1/3-cup of batter into the hot fat, spreading it in a circle. Fry three or four at a time. As the batter begins to set, gently place a stuffed chile on top of each. Cover it with another 1/3-cup of batter. Continue cooking until the underside is browning...not dark. Turn carefully and brown other side. Drain on paper towels and keep warm in 300° oven until all are finished.

Serve with tomato sauce and enjoy the compliments.

## Española eggs

Shortening to fry  
 1 medium onion, sliced  
 8 Anaheim, Big Jim, or Relleno  
 peppers, green roasted  
 If you want fire for breakfast use  
 one chiltipine or habañero, diced  
 3 eggs  
 ½ cup cheddar cheese, grated  
 Dash salt & black pepper

Saute the sliced onion, diced hot pepper, and green roasted chile in large frying pan.

When chile is browning on both sides and the onion is transparent, add the eggs, mixed thoroughly, holding the eggs around the peppers. Let eggs cook until you can gently turn over, dividing the batch, as needed to turn over. When all have been turned sprinkle the top with grated cheese and finish cooking.

When done, serve with warm flour tortillas for a great breakfast. I like mine with a dollop of salsa and sour cream.

## Homemade salsa

4 medium tomatoes  
 ½ cup onion, finely chopped  
 ¼ cup celery, finely chopped  
 ¼ cup bell pepper, finely chopped  
 ¼ cup olive oil  
 3 Tbsp. fresh Jalapeño or Tam  
 Jalapeño pepper, finely chopped  
 2 Tbsp. vinegar or juice from one  
 small lime  
 1 tsp. fresh cilantro, finely chopped  
 1 tsp. salt

Peel the tomatoes by plunging them into boiling water for 30 seconds, then dipping into ice cold water. Cut out the stem and core, then slip off the peel. Add the other ingredients, cover and refrigerate overnight. Stir before serving. Like everything else, homemade salsa beats the heck out of the expensive stuff from the store.

## Red chile powder

In Mexican and many New Mexican and Arizonan markets, chile powder is simply dried, seeded chilies. Often ancho, Big Jim, Anaheim, or other large peppers are used. The "American" variety of chile powder is usually "diluted" with other ingredients, such as cumin, oregano and garlic. My chile powder is just that: powdered chilies!

To make your own superior chile powder, simply dry whatever peppers you prefer, from mild and mellow to fiery hot, just as they come from the bush. Red, ripe chilies are best, but I also use green chilies which can be quite good. I dry mine using simple ristas, strung with a carpet thread through the stem, into eighteen inch to two foot bunches, and leave them hanging in the kitchen until needed. You can also dry them in a dehydrator.

Before grinding, cut into each pepper and remove the seeds and ribs. Remember to wear rubber gloves to avoid becoming a hot chile, yourself. You can grind in a traditional metate with a stone manor or use a blender. I use an old glass blender I picked up for 50¢ at a yard sale. That's the only use that blender sees because the capsicum oil doesn't easily wash away and will remain for several washings strongly flavoring any other foods processed. Likewise, be sure there is a top as that flying, drifting chile dust will get in your sinuses and eyes. Grind a small amount at a time and pour the powder into a tight fitting dry glass jar for storage.

## Native American squash and chilies

2 green roasted chilies, such as  
 ancho, del arbol or Big Jim  
 1 medium onion, finely chopped  
 1 diced green or red bell pepper  
 Dash, each black pepper, salt, garlic powder

4 ears fresh corn cut from cob or 2  
 cups frozen or canned corn  
 2 small summer squash, cut into  
 fairly thin strips  
 ½ cup shelled beans or French cut  
 green beans  
 Oil to sauté

Coarsely chop chilies, then add onion, bell pepper, and spices to moderately hot oil in a medium frying pan. Stir until barely tender. Add corn, squash, and beans. Simmer until tender. Serve with salsa or top with salted sunflower seeds (hulled). Look, a tasty, native, healthy dish—plus you got rid of two more summer squash. Δ

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# THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

(Believing it is important for people to be able to laugh at themselves, this is a new feature in *Backwoods Home Magazine*. We invite readers to submit any jokes you'd like to share to *BHM*, P.O. Box 40, Montague, CA 96064. There is no payment for jokes used.)

**O**ne hundred women were interviewed and asked the question, "Would they sleep with the President if the opportunity arose?" Seventy four percent said: "No! Never again!"

**T**here was a very rich Irishman who had a little dog. It meant the world to him. When the dog died, he went to the priest. "Father Murphy, my little dog is dead. I'd sure enough appreciate it if ye'd say a public mass fer 'im." "Sorry, Patrick," said the priest, "We don't say mass fer dogs 'n' the like. But you go on down there to the Protestant church. With their progressive thinking, who knows what they'll do." "Well, Father, I wouldn't want to offend them. Do ya think a donation of a 100,000 pounds would be fitting fer such a service?" Patrick asked. "Now, Patrick, why didn't ye tell me that there little dog was a Catholic in the first place!!!"

*Rodney Dangerfield Quotes*  
I could tell my parents hated me. My bath toys were a toaster and a radio.  
What a dog I got, he found out we look alike, so he killed himself.  
I worked in a pet store and people would ask how big I would get.  
I remember the time I was kidnapped and they sent back a piece of my finger to my father. He said he wanted more proof.  
My uncle's dying wish was to have me sit in his lap—he was in the electric chair.  
I went to a gay bar, they wanted proof of sex so I showed them; they said it wasn't enough.  
I went to a freak show and they let me in for nothing.  
I stuck my head out the window and got arrested for mooning.  
When my old man wanted sex, my mother would show him a picture of me.

## BUMPER STICKERS

Submitted by Kelley Construction of Indiana

WE HAVE ENOUGH YOUTH.  
HOW ABOUT A FOUNTAIN  
OF SMART.

LEARN FROM YOUR  
PARENTS' MISTAKES —  
USE BIRTH CONTROL

MAKE IT IDIOT PROOF  
AND SOMEONE WILL MAKE  
A BETTER IDIOT

LORENA BOBBITT FOR  
WHITE HOUSE INTERN

KEEP HONKING —  
I'M RELOADING

## The Best Things About Being Male

(Submitted by Robert Bateman)

Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat.  
You can rationalize any behavior.  
A five-day vacation requires only one suitcase.  
Your public bathroom lines are 80 percent shorter.  
Princess Di's death was just another obituary.  
You get to think about sex 90% of your waking hours  
You can kill your own food.  
You know at least 20 ways to open a beer bottle.  
You get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness.  
You never have to clean a toilet.  
You can be showered and ready to go in 10 minutes.  
Wedding plans take care of themselves.  
You never have to worry about other people's feelings.  
You can write your name in the snow.  
Flowers fix everything.  
Someday you'll be a dirty old man.  
If something mechanical doesn't work, you can bash it with a hammer or throw it against the wall.

# THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

## STRANGE COINCIDENCES

Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846.  
John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.  
Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.  
John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.

The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters. Both were particularly concerned with civil rights.

Both wives lost their children while living in the White House. Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.

Both were shot in the head.

Lincoln's secretary was named Kennedy.  
Kennedy's secretary was named Lincoln.

Both were assassinated by Southerners.  
Both were succeeded by Southerners.

Both successors were named Johnson.

Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808.

Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln, was born in 1839.

Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated Kennedy, was born in 1939.

Both assassins were known by their three names. Both names comprise 15 letters.

Booth ran from the theater and was caught in a warehouse.

Oswald ran from a warehouse and was caught in a theater.

Booth and Oswald were both assassinated before their trials.

And here's the kicker:

A week before Lincoln was shot he was in Monroe, Maryland.

A week before Kennedy was shot he was in Marilyn Monroe?

Spooky, eh?

After having their 11th child, a redneck couple decided that that was enough. They could not afford a larger double-wide. So, the husband went to his doctor, who also treated mules, and told him that he and his wife/cousin didn't want to have any more children.

The doctor told him that there was a procedure called a vasectomy that could fix the problem. The doctor instructed him to go home, get a cherry bomb (small fireworks), light it, put it in a beer can, then hold the can up to his ear and count to 10.

The redneck said to the doctor, "I may not be the smartest man, but I don't see how putting a cherry bomb in a beer can next to my ear is going to help me."

So, the couple drove to get a second opinion.

The second doctor was just about to tell them about the medical procedure for a vasectomy when he realized how truly backwards these people were. This doctor instead told the man to go home and get a cherry bomb, light it, place it in a beer can, hold it to his ear, and count to 10.

Figuring that both learned physicians couldn't be wrong, the man went home, lit a cherry bomb, and put it in a beer can. He held the can up to his ear and began to count. "1, 2, 3, 4, 5 . . .", at which point he paused, placed the beer can between his legs, and resumed counting on his other hand.

## The following are actual statements made during court cases.

From a defendant representing himself...

Defendant: Did you get a good look at me when I stole your purse?

Victim: Yes, I saw you clearly. You are the one who stole my purse.

Defendant: I should have shot you while I had the chance.

Lawyer: "Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "Did you check for blood pressure?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "Did you check for breathing?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "How can you be so sure, Doctor?"

Witness: "Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar."

Lawyer: "But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?"

Witness: "It is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere."

Lawyer: How do you feel about defense attorneys?

Juror: I think they should all be drowned at birth.

Lawyer: Well, then, you are obviously biased for the prosecution.

Juror: That's not true. I think prosecutors should be drowned at birth, too.

## Where I live

By Annie Duffy

### Shearing, carding, spinning, weaving, and creating with Margaret Boos

**I**f you're going to make something that you want to last, why not start with good quality material," says Margaret Boos who raises and spins her own wool. She makes and sells beautiful hats, purses, scarves, and many other things, and I recently had the chance to learn how she does it and make some with her.

Margaret and her husband, Paul Boos, have raised their own sheep for 20 years. They are currently the only owners and breeders of Cotswold sheep in Siskiyou County in northern California. Cotswolds are a long-wooled breed of sheep. Their wool is

curly, rather than crimped, and has an amazing luster that is apparent even when the wool is dyed and felted. They are on the rare breeds list of sheep, the livestock equivalent to the endangered species list.

Along with her blue-ribbon Purebred Cotswolds, Margaret also raises Corriedale-Cotswold and Rambouillet-Cotswold crosses.

The Booses hire a professional to come shear their sheep. The last time they sheared sheep they got 33 fleeces.

Margaret individually wraps and labels each wool fleece with the sheep's name, because each sheep produces a different texture of wool. She wraps it with a bed sheet instead of a plastic bag because the wool has to breathe.

Before she washes the wool, she shakes out as much dirt as she can. Then, using her washing machine as a basin because it is large, she fills it with hot water and soaks the wool adding Orvis, a mild detergent used for 4-H animals and handmade crafts. Orvis has no chemicals and leaves no residue.

Margaret said it's important not to agitate



Some of Margaret's ski caps that she made out of un-dyed yarn

the wool, or even let the water beat down on the wool, because that can ruin the wool by making it turn to felt.

After the wool soaks for a few hours, she pulls it out, drains the washer, and refills it with lukewarm water to rinse it. She takes the wool out again, drains the water, and puts it back in and runs the machine on the spin cycle to spin the excess water out. She then lays the wool out to dry on racks out of the sun. Once the wool is dry, she picks out the remaining burrs.

I got to help Margaret when it came time to spin the wool into yarn. The first step to prepare the wool for spinning is to card it. Carding wool is like brushing it: it lines up the fibers so they can be easily spun. Most people don't have the luxury of an electric carder, but Margaret wanted to save herself the nasty task of hand-carding. She says hers was expensive but well worth it. Depending on how smooth you want the finished yarn, you can run the wool through the carder as many times as you want. Today we ran the wool through the carder twice so it wouldn't be too lumpy to work with. If we wanted the coarser "home



Annie Duffy spins Cotswold wool.



*Some of Margaret's other projects*

spun" look, we would have only run the wool through once.

Then I spun the wool into yarn on a spinning wheel. It was hard for me to keep the yarn from over-twisting on the wheel because I'm so inexperienced, but after a while I got the hang of it. My finished yarn had some huge nubs in it, but Margaret said it looked pretty good for the first time.

Once all of the wool was spun into yarn, I took one end of the yarn and wound it onto a yarn winder to count the yardage. Each time the rack makes a full revolution it equals two yards. I tied the yarn on one side so it wouldn't get tangled, then took the yarn off the winder and put it in a sink to get it wet so we could stretch the kinks out. We didn't let the yarn soak, but just swished it in warm water, then spun the water out in the washing machine. We put the yarn on an Umbrella Swift, a rack that expands to any diameter to get some of the kinks out by stretching it a little bit, then wound it back onto the yarn winder. We let it dry overnight.

The next day, when I got back from school, I went back to Margaret's to finish my project. I wasn't even sure yet what I wanted to make. I decided to make a dream catcher-like weaving. Margaret had made a circular frame by weaving small sticks together and I

wrapped yarn around it to make the warp of the loom, then wove some of my yarn back and forth. Margaret gave me some of her dyed yarns to intersperse with mine. I wove in some green, blue, and red. Once I finished weaving, I tucked some feathers into it and tied on some beads. It now hangs on my wall near my bed. Not only did I learn a

lot about making yarn, but I also made a good hand-made addition to my art collection. Δ

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*Mother takes interest as Margaret Boos plays with lambs.*

# Consider these seven factors when selecting good alfalfa hay

By Kim Dieter

Livestock grazing on a lush green pasture is the ideal situation for many animal owners. But pasture is often limited or not available during parts of the year and other sources of feed are required. One popular feed is baled alfalfa hay. It is a good source of energy, protein, vitamins, and minerals, and it is widely available. However, alfalfa hay can be expensive to purchase and haul. Livestock owners must be able to evaluate alfalfa hay and select the most nutritious hay for the money.

Alfalfa hay varies tremendously in quality and, unfortunately, there is no standard grading system. Hay is purchased from a local producer or feed store and the buyer often has to choose among hay advertised as "cow hay" or "first-cutting hay" or "horse hay." But can goats eat horse hay? Or should cow hay be purchased for sheep?

Many factors affect hay quality. These include climactic conditions, methods of harvest, and the presence of weeds. One part of a field may produce hay vastly different in quality

than another part of the same field. The nutrient requirements of livestock also vary according to the type of animal and the stage of production.

To produce hay, alfalfa plants must be cut and allowed to dry in swaths or windrows. When the moisture content has been reduced to about 20%, the hay is baled, removed from the field, and stored. Bales weigh from 40 pounds to over 100 pounds and are secured with either 2 or 3 strands of twine or wire. Alfalfa may be cut up to 11 times a year, depending on the climate. Each cutting has its own characteristics. If the plants grow during cool weather, the nutrient content will often be higher than plants grown in hot weather.

The seven factors below are very useful in hay evaluation. Once each of the factors has been considered, a decision about the value of the hay for a particular animal can be made. To make the evaluation, find an open bale that represents the hay to be purchased. Pull off a few flakes and observe them carefully.

**1. Color:** Alfalfa hay should be a bright green color. A yellow color indicates damage due to rain, disease, or insects. When hay is baled with a high moisture content, it often turns brown or black. Moldy hay will contain white or gray sections.

**2. Smell:** Good quality alfalfa hay has a sweet aroma. Improperly cured hay smells musty.



Good-quality, barn-stored alfalfa hay

**3. Leafiness:** There should be a high ratio of leaves to stems. The leaves contain much higher levels of nutrients than the stems.

**4. Maturity of plants when harvested:** Check for purple blossoms. The best quality hay has few or no blossoms. As the plant matures and blooms, the nutrient levels decrease.

**5. Stems:** Good quality hay has thin, soft, pliable stems. Large, tough stems reduce the palatability of the hay.

**6. Condition:** The leaves should be firmly attached to the stems. If the hay is baled too dry, the leaves will shatter and separate.

**7. Foreign material:** Avoid hay with thistles, foxtails, poisonous weeds, excess dirt, and rocks. These materials can be a direct hazard to livestock or reduce the nutritive value of the feed. Some hay producers provide a chemical analysis of the hay. Tests are conducted to determine protein, energy, calcium, and phosphorus levels. Data may also be available on the levels of cellulose and other poorly digested materials and the relative feeding value. Be sure to use this data as a method of comparison, if available.

Next, match the quality of the feed with the needs of your livestock. Young growing animals, pregnant females, nursing females, and very active animals require more nutrients. Ruminants such as cattle, sheep, and goats have different requirements than simple-stomached animals. Don't buy moldy hay or hay with dangerous foreign materials for any animal. It isn't worth the risk to the animal's health.

These feeding guides for alfalfa hay are general rules. An animal's condition is the best indicator of adequate nutrition.

## Beef cattle

At least 2% of the body weight of cows and bulls should be fed as hay daily. A 1000-pound cow requires a minimum of 20 pounds of hay. For fattening, up to 3% of the body weight



*To assess hay quality, open a representative bale and pull off a few flakes.*

may be required. Often these cattle are fed about 60% grain and 40% hay.

## Dairy cattle

Use the best quality alfalfa available to provide adequate energy for lactating cows. Don't feed a ration that includes more than 60% grains. Begin feeding top-quality alfalfa to calves at one week of age along with milk and grain. Alfalfa is a good choice for growing heifers and steers.



*Low-quality alfalfa hay. There is a high weed content. The color is bright green and there is no sign of mold or dangerous weeds, however, so it is suitable for beef cows.*

## Goats

Milking does require about 5% to 7% of their body weight as feed daily. Feed high-quality alfalfa and 1/2 pound grain per quart of milk produced. Kids should receive alfalfa hay in addition to milk and grain at one to two weeks of age.

## Sheep

Ewes require about 3% of their body weight as hay. Pregnant ewes will require an additional 1/2 pound or so of grain daily in the last one to two months before lambing. Market lambs should be fed approximately 2% of their body weight as hay and 2 to 3% as grain.

## Horses

Horses used for light work (1 to 3 hours per day) require 1.5% of the body weight as hay and .5% to .75% of body weight as grain.



*A flake of good-quality alfalfa hay. The color is bright green, there is a high leaf-to-stem ratio, the stems are thin, and there is no foreign material.*

## Rabbits

Rabbits require the highest-quality alfalfa. It can be used as the only feed for dry does, bucks, and older rabbits. Lactating does should receive up to 40% of their diet as hay.

Chickens and swine are normally fed grain and protein supplements. However, chickens enjoy a flake of

hay occasionally when foraging is not available. Sows and boars can be fed a flake of alfalfa along with their grain ration. The breeding swine will fill up on the hay but remain in trim condition.

Alfalfa hay can be expensive. There are several money-saving techniques for feeding certain types of animals. Beef cattle and sheep can often be fed lower-quality hay successfully. After cows and ewes wean their calves and lambs, their nutritional requirements drop. These animals are good candidates for fair or good-quality hay. Hay with a slightly bleached color due to a

summer rainstorm or alfalfa/grass mix hay are both usually less expensive.

Take a week or two to gradually switch from another feed source to alfalfa hay. Be sure to monitor consumption. Overeating lush alfalfa hay may cause bloat in ruminants.

Finally, consider the bale size. The livestock owner must be able to move and feed the hay. Pick bales that can be handled easily.

When properly harvested and stored, alfalfa hay is a high quality feed. Use the seven steps to locate the best hay for the money and follow the feeding guidelines to produce healthy animals. Δ

# Kerosene lamps – a bright idea

By Don Fallick

**M**y first experience with a kerosene lamp was humiliating. I was visiting friends who lived in the backwoods. When night came on, they showed me to their guest house, a cozy, eight by ten room complete with six quilts on the bed against a bitter January night, a wood-stove, and two kerosene lamps merrily burning.

I read a while, then realized I had no idea how to turn out the lights. Leave them burning? Too dangerous and wasteful. Turn down the wick? Didn't work. They just smoked terribly. Besides, what if I turned it so far down that the burning end fell in the kerosene? I tried blowing them out. No luck. I tried wrapping a shirt around the chimney to remove it, but just scorched my shirt and burned my fingers. Finally, I tried again to blow directly down the chimney, burning the end of my nose in the process. At this point I humbled myself, got dressed, and walked to the house to beg for help.

Kerosene lamps need not be this daunting, but they are not as simple to use as an electric light. To get the most light from kerosene, with the fewest problems, you really do need to know what you are doing. Here are a few tips:

## Fuel

If at all possible, use "number two," water-clear kerosene. Tinted or scented "lamp oil" looks and smells nice, but it give less light, and can gum up your wick or smoke up your chimney. Lower grades of kerosene, which have higher numbers, can cause similar problems. They will work, if you have nothing else, but you may want to change wicks later, and you'll probably have to clean chimneys sooner.

Kerosene may cost as much as two

dollars per gallon. Keep this in perspective. We use five traditional kerosene lamps and a lantern, and burn about a gallon a month, on average. The lamps burn about five hours per night in winter.

Use a cheap bulb-siphon from the hardware store or auto parts house to transfer fuel from can to lamps. It's important to use the siphon ONLY for kerosene. Gasoline residues in a kerosene lamp are extremely dangerous. I mark the kerosene siphon with adhesive tape to avoid accidental contamination. Keep the intake end of the



*Blowing out a lamp safely*

siphon just above the bottom of the can, to avoid sucking up any sludge that may be present, and throw away the last half-cup or so in the can. Rinse it out with warm water and let it dry thoroughly before refilling.

Siphon outdoors, to minimize problems from spills. In bad weather, use the kitchen sink and be very careful. Work over several thicknesses of old newspapers to soak up spills. Do not burn kerosene-soaked newspapers in your wood-stove! They can start a chimney fire. Kerosene is not volatile like gasoline, and will stay in the

paper for a long, long time. We use kerosene-soaked newspapers to start fires in the burning barrel, where they will do no harm.

## Operation

Do not over-fill the kerosene reservoir. You need some air space between the bottom of the wick holder and the top of the kerosene for good wicking. I have never heard a really satisfactory explanation for this, but have verified it experimentally. When installing a new wick, always soak the wick in kerosene before installing it. The idea is to burn kerosene, not wick. If the top of the wick is dry, it'll be the wick that burns. Burning cotton gives lousy light.

Trim the wick before the first time you light it, and periodically when it needs trimming. Trimming a wick is more art than science, but as a general guideline, at least cut off the corners, and if possible, round the top of the wick a bit. A wick trimmed straight across will give a wide, flat-topped flame that cannot be turned up without smoking excessively. Too pointy a wick produces a thin flame that gives little light. Experiment until you get a flame that gives a strong, bright light when turned up, without smoking. After many hours of burning, the top of the wick will get a little ragged and charred. The flame may have two or more lobes. Trim the char off in the shape that you have learned works best for your lamp.

There are two kinds of lamp owners: those who have burned themselves on a hot chimney—and those who will. To minimize the chance of burns, always check chimneys for heat before you grab them, by placing your hand just above the chimney, palm down. A chimney that is too hot to touch will radiate enough heat to feel. Always check before touching. Someone else may have just blown the lamp out. You cannot see heat.

To light a kerosene lamp, remove the chimney, turn the wick up a bit and light it, and replace the chimney.

The glass will fog up a bit, then clear as it heats up. Pay attention to the lamp while it warms up. As the wick begins to smoke, turn it down, just enough to keep it from smoking. When the glass is hot and the wick is burning well, adjust for maximum light without smoke.

Extinguish a kerosene lamp by holding your hand just behind and above the top of the chimney, and blow on your hand. Adjust the angle of the palm to direct your breath straight down the chimney. A quick puff of breath will blow out the flame. Let the chimney cool before touching it. It's not a bad idea to keep some Solarcaine® around to cool the burns of those who forget.

## Maintenance

Routine maintenance involves cleaning chimneys and replacing wicks. Chimneys eventually collect enough soot to diminish the lamp's light output. Remove the soot with a facial tissue, then wash in warm, soapy water. Rinse in very hot water to which baking soda has been added, to eliminate spotting, and air dry. It's a pain in the neck to clean chimneys properly, especially if you have big hands. Many users clean chimneys and inspect and trim wicks when they fill the lamps.

When the wick gets too short to work right, take the stub wick with you and go buy a replacement. Wicks come in many styles and sizes, even tube-shaped "circular wicks." Even if you get the right style and width,

some wicks are thicker than others. A wick that is too thin or too thick will not feed properly through the wick adjuster and may even damage it. If you cannot find exactly the right wick, it is better to use one that is too narrow than one that is the wrong thickness. A wick that is too narrow will not provide as much light, because the burning surface will be less. You may also have trouble keeping it centered in the adjuster if it is much too narrow, producing an asymmetrical flame that cannot be turned up all the way without smoking.

Chimneys also come in various sizes, and the difference may not be obvious. The lamp is useless without a chimney, so it's a good idea to keep spares on hand. Even a small difference in circumference of the base may keep the lamp from holding the chimney securely. The metal prongs that hold the chimney can be bent to make them tighter or looser, but it's still a good idea to bring the lamp with you when you shop for chimneys. Replacement chimneys are also available mail order from Lehman's Hardware. You must specify the exact size and style.

I have found replacement chimneys at hardware stores, home builder's suppliers, even in the lighting departments of department stores. They come in many styles. Plain chimneys cost three to five dollars. The thickness of the glass is the biggest difference. Thin glass costs less but breaks easier. Chimneys with a thicker bead around the edge seem to last longer than those without. Frosted glass

chimneys give a more diffuse light than clear glass, and are more suitable for decorative lamps than for real, working lights. They

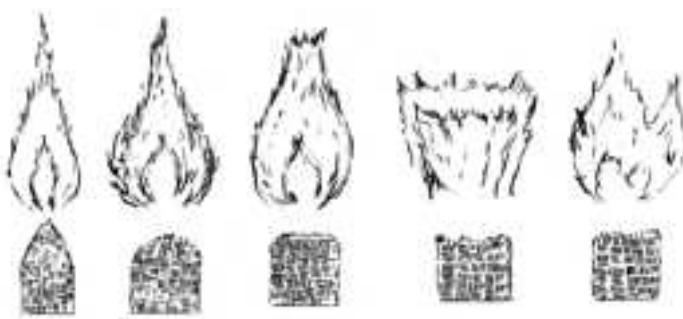
cost more than clear glass, and give less light.

The shape of the chimney also makes a difference. It is not just cosmetic. Air flows differently through different shaped chimneys, producing a different shaped flame. There is no way to predict the exact effect on the light by just looking at the shape of the chimney, but in general, tall, straight chimneys produce a tall, thin, very bright flame, while bulbous chimneys produce a wider flame that may give more total light. The only way to tell is to experiment. Every time you change chimney styles, you will have to adjust the way you trim the wick, too.

Occasionally, a lamp's wick adjuster will get so loose that it can no longer move the wick in and out. This is usually due to age, but may also be caused by using the wrong size wick. You must replace the whole burner. Some of the same stores that sell chimneys also sell replacement burners. It is possible to use a lamp with one of the metal chimney-holding tabs broken off the burner, but it's not a good idea. You don't want a hot glass chimney falling on you or someone you love. This almost always happens at night, when you are using the lamp, of course. Even five or six kerosene lamps together will not give enough light to allow a really good job of sweeping up the broken glass. It's not worth the risk. Keep an extra burner on hand too.

## Purchase

The best lamps have heavy, glass bases, which allow you to see how much kerosene you have left. Sheet metal lamps are much cheaper, and burn just as well, but you will eventually forget to check during the day and run out of kerosene at night. Glass-based lamps have another advantage which is not obvious if you haven't used one. The weight of the base is enough to keep it steady, even with a tall base. Anyone who has ever tried to read a newspaper at night by the



Flame shapes produced by trimming wicks in various ways

## *A Backwoods Home Anthology*

light of a cheap kerosene lamp will appreciate this. In order to see the print, you must put the newspaper close to the light. This is clumsy and dangerous when the light is a burning flame and the lamp is light and unstable. A tall, heavy, glass-based lamp placed on a side table will shed enough light for comfortable reading and be stable enough for safety.

Perfectly good glass lamps can sometimes be found at garage sales and flea markets. Expect to pay more than they are worth if all the parts are in working condition. People think they are antiques. You can frequently find a bargain if the chimney or the burner are missing or damaged. These parts are not expensive to replace.

Most of the damaged or partial lamps you'll find are not traditional kerosene lamps. The Aladdin® Lamp Company has been making high quality, super efficient, kerosene lamps for decades. They use air pressure to volatilize the kerosene and a mantle to distribute and intensify the flame, much like a Coleman® lantern. They are not cheap, they burn twice as much kerosene as a traditional lamp, and you have to replace the mantles frequently. Over the years, Aladdin has produced many different models, and the parts are not interchangeable. There are also Aladdin imitations around, and parts for them are generally unavailable.

Despite these disadvantages, people still buy Aladdin lamps, because they are the best around for home use. They give a pure white light that's as bright as a Coleman® lantern, while avoiding the dangers of storing and using gasoline, white gas, or propane. With optional lamp shades and wall sconces, they look like home furnishings, not like camp lanterns that have been brought indoors. Lehman's Hardware also sells Aladdin lamps and parts. Because of their expense, many users keep only one or two Aladdin lamps for spot lighting or reading, and use traditional lamps for background illumination. Δ

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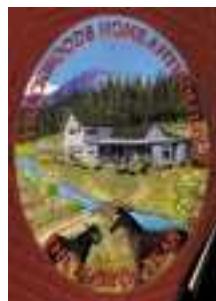
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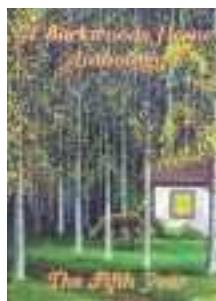
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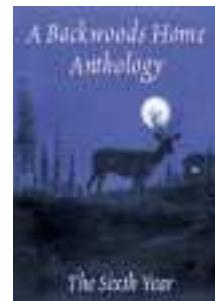
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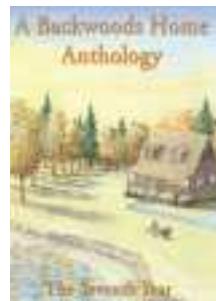
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# Make beautiful bandsaw boxes from scrap wood

By Tony Nester

**F**or the past three years, I have been collecting scrap pieces of wood and turning them into decorative boxes using my bandsaw. It's a very simple procedure and, with the exception of the bandsaw and some glue, costs almost nothing in materials. Whether you are interested in making some one-of-a-kind gifts for the holidays or are considering a part-time income in the arts and crafts circuit, making bandsaw boxes can be an enjoyable approach to woodworking.

## Obtaining wood

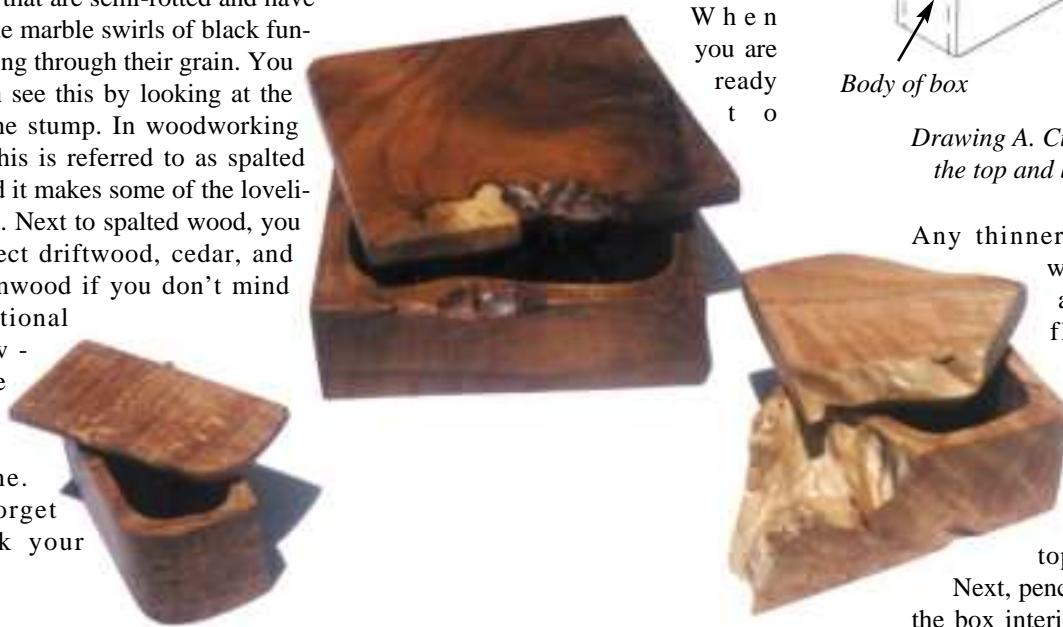
I get most of my wood from one of two places: nature and other woodworkers scrap-piles. The first one is, of course, the least expensive. Whenever I go on a hike through the forest, I bring my trusty bow-saw and collect wood from dead, fallen trees. I prefer those that are medium hardwoods—maple being the best. I look for those that are semi-rotted and have the unique marble swirls of black fungus snaking through their grain. You can often see this by looking at the end of the stump. In woodworking circles, this is referred to as spalted wood and it makes some of the loveliest boxes. Next to spalted wood, you can collect driftwood, cedar, and even ironwood if you don't mind the additional elbow-grease required to complete one. Don't forget to check your

own woodpile if you've just cut a cord of wood.

If you select the natural approach, keep in mind that you may need to let your pieces dry for up to six months or more depending on the thickness of the wood. After removing any bark and dirt, place the wood in a warm, dry place where the air can circulate and then rotate it once a month. A hot attic or shed sounds ideal for drying but can often cause the wood to severely crack.

The second approach is to visit other woodworkers, lumberyards, and furniture-makers to see if they have any scraps free for the taking. One such furniture shop in Grand Rapids, Michigan where I once lived, used to regularly toss out chunks of mahogany! The nice thing with wood from the above sources is that they are ready to be worked. If you can't locate any wood go to the lumberstore and ask for a 4"x4" piece of pine or aspen. This is great material to start on and, because it's softwood, will make life easier on your bandsaw blades.

When  
you are  
ready  
to

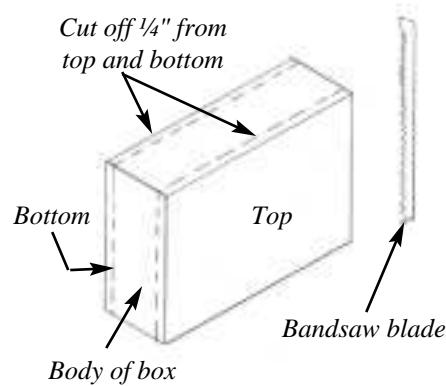


make your first box, you will need only a pencil and a good eye for studying how the wood wants to be shaped. In bandsaw boxes, unlike more traditional, mitered boxes where the angles and joinery must be precise, one can flow with the inherent shape of the wood and create unconventional, artsy designs.

My bandsaw is a small, Delta 8" with a 1/3 horsepower that has made hundreds of boxes and roughed out a few wood bows. I mainly use two blade sizes: 3/8" for cutting thick sections and 1/8" for making wavy designs or sharp turns. The following are some general outlines regardless of what type or size machine you may have.

## Making the boxes

**Step 1:** Pencil in the top and bottom edges on your block of wood (drawing A). Make them around 1/4-inch thick.

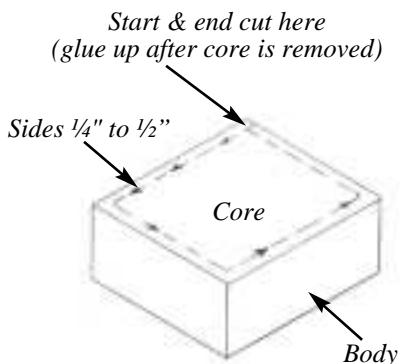


Drawing A. Cutting off the top and bottom

Any thinner and you risk weakening the area. With the flattest surface down, use your bandsaw to slice these edges off.

Place these aside, marking top from bottom.

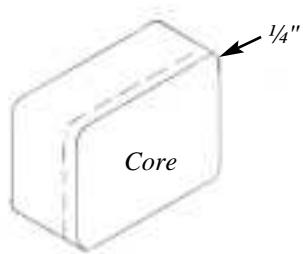
Next, pencil in the edge of the box interior, allowing the



*Drawing B. Cutting out the core*

same  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch margin and determine what side you will enter the blade from (this will later be glued up and nearly invisible).

The  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch blade is helpful for the next part. Cut out the box interior



*Drawing C. Remove  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from core.  
This will be glued onto the lid.*

(drawing B), making sure to proceed slowly around the turns. Just as you approach the finishing spot (where you began), turn the machine off and carefully back the blade out of the original entrance. The center should now separate from the box.

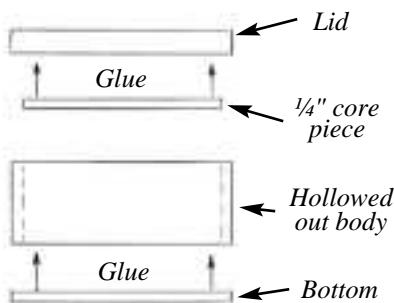
Use woodglue to seal the entrance cut, making sure to wipe excess glue from the inside. Wrap tape or rubberbands around the body to supply pressure while the glue dries. Now, take that chunk of wood that was the center, turn it on its side and slice off a  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch to  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece (drawing C). This will be glued onto the inside of the lid (the top piece you first cut) and provide a form-fitting cover for the box.



*From left to right: Maple root box, large mesquite box, and spalted maple box*

Clamp these parts and set aside. The last glue-job will be reattaching the bottom to the body of the box (drawing D). Coat the body's underside with glue and press firmly to the bottom section, again wiping excess from the inside. To ensure proper joining, you can either clamp the entire object to a workbench or simply stack some bricks or weights on top of the body. Let all parts dry for a few hours or overnight. Remember also that any leftover pieces can be transformed into more boxes.

**Step 2:** For sanding, you really only need to smooth the outside unless the blade marks are really obvious on the inside of your box. Start at #80 grit to remove the blade marks and continue up to #220 for a satiny, smooth feel.



*Drawing D. Assembly of the box*

Afterwards, lightly brush off the pieces to remove the dust.

If you are content with the look of your box, then all you have to do is to preserve it with oil. However, you can also spice it up by gluing a colorful insert of leather or suede to the bottom of the inside.

**Step 3:** For the final finish, I brush on a mixture of Danish Oil and vegetable oil. You can use plain vegetable oil but it takes a while to saturate the wood deep down, so it may take several coatings. By the way, spalted wood will suck up every quart of oil in your house if you let it but it's essential to oil this type of wood at least once as it stops the fungal growth from breaking down the fibers. For the long life of your box or any similar piece of wood, oil it a few times a year and you'll have a friend for life.

Lastly, once everything is dry, wipe it to remove any residue and your one-of-a-kind box will delight anyone who sees it.

If you decide to pursue this hobby or if you are using spalted wood, which contains fungus, it's a good idea to either do your woodworking outside and/or pickup a good dust mask.

Two excellent books containing dozens of plans are *Making Boxes With The Bandsaw* by Tom Crabb, and *Read the Wood* by Michael Elkan. △